



Advancing Accessibility Standards through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society



© 2024 Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society

All rights reserved.

Cover illustration by Nooks Lindell, Hinaani Designs

Report template, data visualizations,
and infographics by Michelle Hopgood

Infographic illustrations by Amy Ryu

Advancing Accessibility Standards through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society

This project has been made possible by



Accessibility Standards
Canada

Canada

“ The true honesty between us needs to get out instead of being stigmatized, because it’s like we’re all fighting each other, because we want to be on top. But there’s no race in reality. We’re not reaching to have one person on top of our hill. You know, that would be one lonely star. Right? So let’s look at the bigger picture. If we invite more people above the, above the higher level, there will be a lot of stars.”

— Noah Papatsie, Disability Advocate
Iqaluit, NU

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	10
Acknowledgements	11
Definitions	13
Accessibility Standards Canada, Areas of Priority	13
Community Champion	13
Disability	13
Inuinnaqtun	13
Inuit	14
Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit	14
Inuktitut	14
Inuktut	15
Jordan’s Principle/ Inuit Child First Initiative	15
Nunavut	15
Nunavummiut/Nunavummi	16
Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS)	16
Nunavummi Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti (NNI) Policy	16
Piliriqatigiinniq Research Model/Philosophy	16
Southerners	16

Introduction	18
Disability and Identity	20
Methodology	24
Limitations	28
Study Details	30
Age	30
Gender	31
Indigenous Identity	32
Marital Status	32
Education	33
Household Income	34
Employment	35
Discussion	37
Employment	40
Finding and Keeping a Job	43
Accommodations	46
Career Development	50
IQ Values and Employment	54
Recommendations	56
Built Environment	60
Accessibility Features for Buildings	65

Dangerous Conditions	67
Resources Needed to Make Homes Accessible	68
Public Spaces	70
Walkways and Roads.....	71
Outdoor Recreation.....	73
Emergency Exits and Safety Features.....	74
Acoustics.....	75
Signage and Wayfinding	76
IQ Values and the Built Environment	76
Recommendations	78
Communication	82
Clear Communication from Services Providers	84
Communication Barriers and Accessing Services	87
Media and Community Communication.....	91
IQ Values and Communication.....	92
Recommendations.....	93
Procurement.....	96
Inequality in Procurement.....	97
Lack of Transparency.....	98
Procurement and Transportation	100
Awareness and Capacity.....	102

Advocacy for Equality.....	104
Access to Resources and Impact on Daily Life.....	106
Desire for Community Involvement.....	107
IQ Values and Procurement.....	109
Recommendations.....	111
Programs and Services	116
Attitudinal Barriers.....	117
Quality of Service	123
Community, Recreational, and Cultural Programming	126
Shelters, Safe Houses and Food Banks.....	129
Ambulances and Emergency Services.....	132
Eligibility Requirements.....	135
IQ Values and Programs and Services.....	136
Recommendations.....	137
Information and Communication Technology	140
Access to Internet and Infrastructure	141
Differences in Perspective.....	144
Accessing Services and Accommodations.....	145
IQ Values and Information and Communication Technology	147
Recommendations.....	148
Transportation	152

No Transportation Means No Access	156
How People Manage.....	159
Air Travel.....	163
Medical Travel	166
Medical Escorts.....	167
IQ Values and Transportation	168
Recommendations.....	169
Conclusion	172
Appendices	182
Appendix A: IQ Values.....	182
Appendix B: Accessibility Standards.....	184
Appendix C: Relevant News Articles.....	186
Employment.....	186
Built Environment.....	186
Communication.....	187
Procurement	188
Programs and Services.....	188
Information and Communication Technology	190
Transportation	190
Accessibility Standards Canada	192
Other.....	192

Executive Summary

This research project, led by Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS), aims to advance and inform the development of accessibility standards from an Inuit perspective, explicitly tailored to Nunavut.

Engaging with Nunavummiut with disabilities, experts, and partners in the disability field, this project seeks to ensure inclusive participation and connect community members with broader accessibility discussions. As such, the research team visited all 25 of Nunavut's fly-in communities and interviewed 543 respondents. Through one-on-one and group discussions of 3-25 people, participants shared their personal experiences and perspectives on how to make the territory more inclusive and accessible. Covering a broad range of topics, Nunavummiut gave feedback on supports that are urgently needed to ensure safety and accessibility for all.

Key findings from interviews and group discussions indicate an urgent need for in-community transportation, safe and accessible housing, recreational and social programs, and improvements to service provision (including health services). Accessibility standards that will ensure an inclusive Nunavut will improve infrastructure (housing, roads, transportation), address gaps in service delivery (improved training, accessible application processes, improved communication and transparency), and provide all Nunavummiut with opportunities to participate in community life (more recreational, educational, social, and cultural programming).

“ For us, making things accessible is about working together as a community. We should figure out what’s stopping people from joining in and find ways to help fix it together.”

— Study participant

Acknowledgements

We extend our deepest gratitude to all participants who generously shared their experiences and insights. Your contributions are vital to advancing our understanding of accessibility needs in Nunavut.

On behalf of the Board of Directors at NDMS, we express our sincere thank you to everyone involved in this project. Your dedication and support are instrumental in helping us work towards a more inclusive and accessible Nunavut.

Special thanks to our partners and contributors for their unwavering support.

Special gratitude to the members of the Advisory Committee who gave their time and expertise to guide and shape this project.

We also extend our thanks to the Community Champions, Interpreters and Translators who supported this work and facilitated connections.

Finally, our sincere thank you to Accessibility Standards Canada/the Government of Canada for making this project possible.

To all of you, your collaboration and support have been crucial to the success of this project. We hope to continue our work together to ensure a more inclusive future for all Nunavummiut.

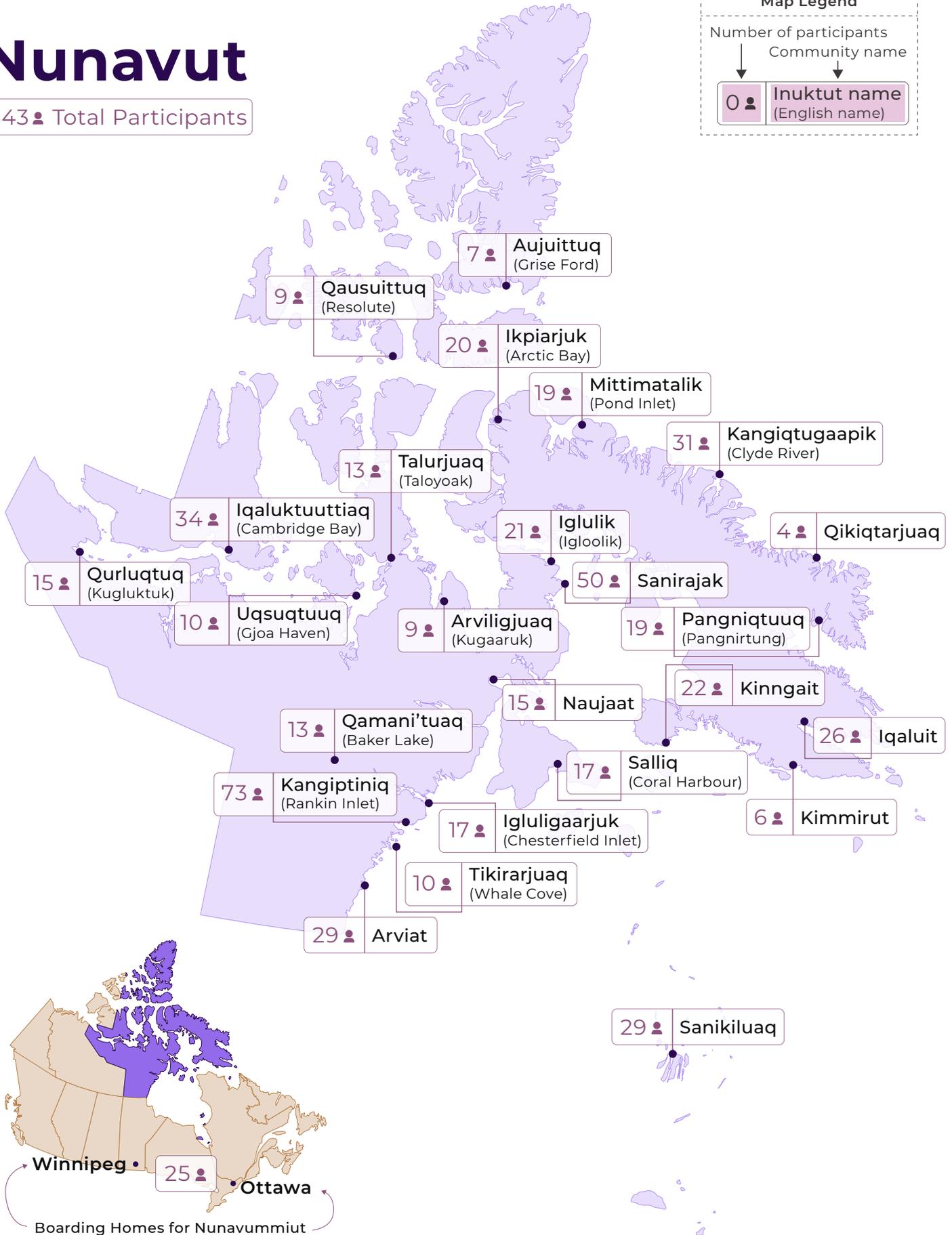
Nunavut

543  Total Participants

Map Legend

Number of participants
Community name

 Inuktitut name
(English name)



Definitions

Accessibility Standards Canada, Areas of Priority

At the time of this project, Accessibility Standards Canada identified seven priority areas, as defined in the Accessible Canada Act, that shape research and consultation to inform Canada's federal standards for an accessible country. These priority areas include employment; the built environment; communication (other than information and communication technologies); procurement of goods, services and facilities; design and delivery of programs and services; information and communication technology; and transportation.ⁱ These priority areas provided the focus for this research. Nunavummiut were invited to weigh in on these areas of discussion to contribute to an inclusive Nunavut and an accessible Canada.

Community Champion

Trustworthy community members who assisted the research team by promoting the project, facilitating contact with potential participants, and providing local insights to overcome research barriers.

Disability

As defined by the Nunavut Human Rights Act, it can mean any previous or existing or perceived mental or physical disability, including substance abuse. It is important to note that this definition includes a broad range of conditions and is not universally accepted or identified by Nunavummiut.

Inuinnaqtun

Inuinnaqtun is a language spoken by Inuit in the Kitikmeot region in central and western Nunavut as well as parts of the

ⁱ Creating accessibility standards. Creating accessibility standards - Accessibility Standards Canada. (2024, May 17). <https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards>

Northwest Territories. Though related to Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun is a language of its own. With under 600 fluent speakers remaining, preservation and revitalization efforts are underway.ⁱⁱ

Inuit

Inuit are distinct yet diverse, and the term “Inuit” represents groups of culturally distinct individuals who are Indigenous to the circumpolar region. Inuit live all across Canada’s polar regions, and also live in Greenland, Russia, and Alaska.ⁱⁱⁱ The Inuit homeland is known as Inuit Nunangat. Inuktitut is an umbrella term for the Inuit languages, with Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut being spoken in the territory.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, or “what Inuit have always known to be true” reflects the worldview, values, and ways of being of Inuit.^{iv} Colloquially known as IQ Values, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit has been distilled into a set of values for Qallunaat (or Southerner) understanding and application. These values include but are not limited to pilimmaksarniq (knowledge and skills acquisition), avatimik kamattiarniq (environmental stewardship), qanuqtuurniq (resourcefulness and creativity), piliriqgatiingniq (working together towards a common goal), aajiiqatigiinni (consensus), tunnganarniq (being welcome and open), pijitsirniq (serving others) and inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respect and care for others). Inuit Societal Values are often used interchangeably with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

Inuktitut

Inuktitut is the primary Inuit language spoken in the Qikiqtani and Killivaq regions. Over half of Inuit in Nunavut communicate

-
- ii Inuinnaqtun Language Survival- Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq Kitikmeot Heritage Society (n.d.). <https://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca/language>
 - iii ICC’s political universe- Bringing the united Inuit voice to the world- Inuit Circumpolar Council (n.d.) <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/about-icc/icc-political-universe/>
 - iv Department of Culture and Heritage, Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit and Tuttarviit. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/inuit-qaujimajatuqangit-katimajit-and-tuttarviit>

in Inuktitut at home.^v Despite the high number of speakers, there is still a decline in intergenerational transmission of the language. Inuktitut is still declining, and many efforts are being made to protect it.

Inuktitut

Inuktitut is an umbrella term encompassing the Inuit languages and dialects. Both Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut are included under the term Inuktitut,^{vi} and both are legislated as the official languages of the territory.^{vii}

Jordan's Principle/ Inuit Child First Initiative

Jordan's Principle is an initiative ensuring that Indigenous children have equitable access to necessary services and supports, free from delays due to jurisdictional disputes between government entities.^{viii} Named after Jordan River Anderson, it mandates that children receive timely and comprehensive care, including health, education, social services, and cultural support.^{ix} The Inuit Child First Initiative is the name of the branch of Jordan's Principle that specifically applies to Inuit children.

Nunavut

Nunavut is an expansive territory in the North of what is now known as Canada. It is the largest land claim in Canadian history, and Nunavut is continually working towards greater sovereignty.^x Individuals from Nunavut are referred to as "Nunavummiut."

v Campaigns and Advocacy- Qikiqtani Inuit Association (n.d.). <https://www.qia.ca/what-we-do/campaigns/>

vi Inuktitut- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (n.d.). <https://www.itk.ca/projects/inuktitut/>

vii Official Languages Act. S. Nu. 2008 c. 10.

viii Government of Canada; Indigenous Services Canada. (2024, August 14). Jordan's principle. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396042341/1568396159824>

ix Chambers, L., & Burnett K. (2017). Jordan's Principle. *American Indian Quarterly*, 41(2).

x About Nunavut- Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/about-nunavut>

Nunavummiut/Nunavummi

The residents or people of Nunavut, the largest and northernmost territory of Canada.

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS)

Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS) is an Inuit-led non-profit organization, providing advocacy, support and programming.^{xi} NDMS is the only cross-territory and pan-disability organization in Nunavut, supporting Nunavummiut who experience barriers to community participation from infants to Elders.

Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuti (NNI) Policy

Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuti (NNI) is a policy of Nunavut's Department of Economic Development and Transportation (EDT), that requires EDT to promote and increase economic opportunities for Nunavummiut.^{xii}

Piliriqatigiinniq Research Model/Philosophy

A collaborative research approach that emphasizes working together for the common good, incorporating community perspectives and concerns into the research process.^{xiii}

Southerners

People who come from areas outside of Nunavut, primarily southern Canada.

xi Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society – we all do better, all together!. Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS). (2021b, December 29). <http://www.nuability.ca/>

xii Welcome. Welcome | Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuti. (n.d.). <https://nni.gov.nu.ca/>

xiii Healy, G., & Tagak Sr., A. (2014). PILIRIQATIGIINNIQ 'Working in a collaborative way for the common good': A perspective on the space where health research methodology and Inuit epistemology come together. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 7(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcis.v7i1.117>



Introduction

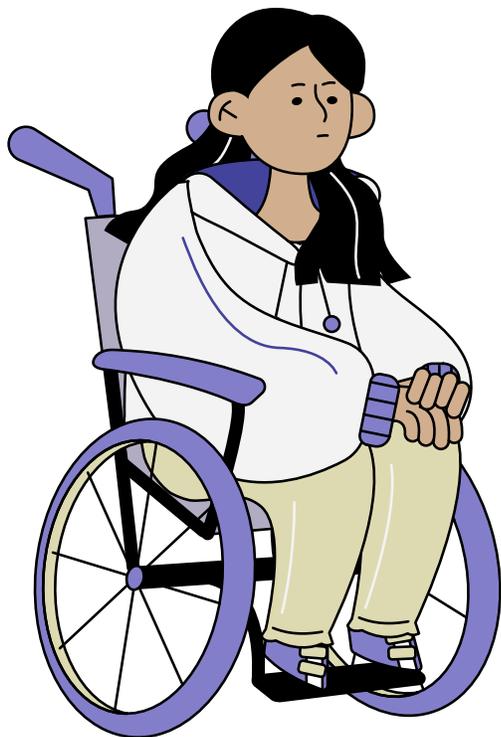
There is limited research on the experiences of disability in Nunavut. Existing literature often focuses on specific types of disabilities or is confined to studies in only one or two communities.

This project, however, is distinctly different because it provides a comprehensive scan of disability across all 25 remote communities in Nunavut. By addressing various experiences of disability and including participation from every community, the study offers a broad and inclusive perspective. Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society (NDMS) is the only cross-disability advocacy organization in Nunavut. As such, this project is particularly relevant to us as it delivers crucial insights into the challenges experienced by people with disabilities in the circumpolar North. This project offers Nunavummiut the platform to share their experiences of disability, helping to shape a blueprint for advocacy efforts. The ultimate goal is to create a truly accessible and inclusive Nunavut, informed by the perspectives and experiences of those who live with disabilities every day.

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), translating roughly to “what Inuit have always known to be true,” is a broad term encompassing Inuit cultural values and societal norms. Please see Appendix A for a list of IQ values and their meaning. IQ values were central in forming Nunavut as a territory in the late 1990s, and its principles were integrated into systems, policies and infrastructure. However, current efforts to formalize IQ may unintentionally simplify this multifaceted cultural value system for practical applications. IQ is deeply ingrained in the lived experiences of Inuit and their communities, defying easy categorization. While many participants in this study indirectly reference how IQ shapes their experiences and perceptions of accessibility and inclusion, these values are often implicit and not explicitly named. This project aims to draw connections

FIGURE 1 Meet Eeta

Eeta is a representation of the many stories and experiences shared for this study. Follow her journey throughout this report.

**Meet Eeta!**

Eeta is a 26-year-old Inuk woman from a small community.

She sometimes uses a wheelchair or cane because she injured her back and hip in an accident.

between the insights shared during interviews and group discussions and underlying IQ principles. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that this endeavour represents an abstraction of the intricate nature of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which serves as a guiding force across all aspects of social life.

As such, Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit should serve as the foundation for establishing accessibility standards in Nunavut. These fundamental principles are essential for fostering a healthy and inclusive community. IQ values naturally guide the development of accessibility standards by setting forth principles of practice that ensure autonomy, resourcefulness, respect (for people, and for the environment), care and provisions for all (including the vulnerable), and consensus-driven, inclusive decision-making processes.

Building on this foundation, the following paper will highlight Nunavummiut's experiences regarding accessibility, where participants expressed a strong desire for increased autonomy and self-reliance (Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq), as well as more opportunities for community cohesion and mutual support (Piliriqatigiinniq). They expressed love for their families and emphasized the joy they received in caring for

each other and being cared for in return (Inuuqatigiitsiarniq). They celebrated the resilience and resourcefulness of Inuit (Qanuqtuurniq), expressing pride in their communities' ability to innovate and adapt. They described a vision for the future of Nunavut—a future fully accessible and inclusive for all, grounded in Inuit culture and knowledge.

Disability and Identity

Understanding the term “disability” in Nunavut involves some complexity. There is no Inuktitut word for “disability,” and many argue that the concept of disability is not culturally relevant to Inuit.

Current understandings of the term result from colonization and Western medical and institutional models. Prior to colonization, communities would work together to ensure all community members’ needs were met. This allowed illness or disablement to occur without the need for a label.

“Well, I think it’s important to remember that disability is a part of life, and it’s something that affects people in our community just like anywhere else but we just didn’t look at it the same way.”

“And I think especially for Nunavummiut, um that word is not something, I don’t think, many people would identify with, because the whole conception of how people are included, at least in my experience ... disability isn’t a word I don’t think most Nunavummiut would even use because the model of social inclusion is so much stronger societally.”

“Yes, I think colonization changed how we see disabilities today because when they came, they brought new ideas that really did, that affected how we understand and help people with disabilities and even our own people. Their ideas might have made us focus more on individual problems and medical, like fixing people or like there is something wrong with them, instead of working together as a community to support everyone.”

Currently, the definition of disability used by the Nunavut Human Rights Act states that disability can mean any previous

or existing or perceived mental or physical disability, including substance abuseⁱ. High rates of drug and alcohol use in Nunavut can be attributed to equally high rates of trauma, suicidality and poor socio-economic factors. This broad definition means that a significant portion of Nunavut's population can self-identify as having a disability. However, many Nunavummiut do not identify as having a disability.

"I'm technically disabled, but I don't feel disabled in the most amazing way of, um, I, there's not a day where I feel like, specifically where I am in my life and with the people I'm around in my community, I don't go feeling, "oh", I don't go out in the world feeling "oh, my gosh, I'm different". Or, you know, to feel bad or feel like those limitations. I'm just me."

As many participants reported, the term disability continues to carry stigma. As stated by several respondents, the term carries a "heaviness", and many are reluctant to use it to describe their own experience or the experience of a loved one. Some respondents told us that they dislike the term but have accepted it as a means to access support, particularly support and benefits from government and medical institutions.

"There are so many issues like stigmatization, like accessibility um. I have lost words. The terms subjective, but trust me, there are so many things that make the word disability very difficult. Like I said, it's a heavy word and it's kind of a label on you."

"Well, I, the term, it's a big, it kind of has a weight. It's a bit heavy, and you, you cannot decide for others. But um, to me, you, just depending on the individual, because people have different kind of disability as the word is, so I would prefer if you address people by the kind of disability they're suffering from. But the word itself is kind of heavy."

Discussions with participants revealed a nuanced relationship

ⁱ Human rights act, official consolidation of. Legislation. (n.d.). <https://www.nunavutlegislation.ca/en/consolidated-law/human-rights-act-official-consolidation>

with the term “*disability*” itself. Many participants initially stated they did not identify as having a disability, yet as conversations progressed, they would disclose conditions recognized under Canadian definitions of disability, such as cerebral palsy or schizophrenia. This discrepancy highlights a significant divergence between cultural perceptions and legal or medical definitions. In Nunavut, the concept of disability also intersects with historical encounters shaped by Western ideologies introduced during colonization. Unlike Western societies, traditional Inuit perspectives did not historically categorize individuals based on disability. Inuit culture traditionally approached the concept of illness or disablement as part of the communal fabric, without the need for specific labels. This difference in perception is rooted in the community-oriented nature of Inuit society, where all members’ needs were addressed collectively, ensuring that each person could contribute to the community’s well-being.

“there are so many things that make the word disability very difficult. Like I said, it’s a heavy word and it’s kind of a label on you.”

The introduction of these external frameworks has imposed labels that carry stigma and negative implications. As a result, many Nunavummiut do not readily adopt the label of disability, not because of hesitation but because it does not align with their traditional worldview or cultural understanding. This disconnect underscores the ongoing challenge of reconciling cultural identity with externally imposed definitions. Pressuring Inuit to adopt these labels can be viewed as a form of assimilation, continuing historical patterns of imposing foreign concepts on Inuit . Navigating this complex terrain necessitates fostering inclusive dialogues that respect and integrate Inuit perspectives on well-being and community support, while also addressing the systemic and historical factors that shape perceptions of disability within Nunavut.

In response to this feedback, the research team focused on discussing barriers with research participants. Barriers to employment, resources, and participation in community life were ways of approaching a discussion about accessibility in Nunavut

without triggering stigmatization or alienation. Discussing barriers was an effective and culturally appropriate way to welcome participants into a conversation about accessibility that was inclusive and addressed the community's needs as a whole. Many participants were eager to report on the barriers they perceive community members, particularly Elders, may experience. Respondents wanted to see barriers removed so that all community members could live a good life.

Methodology

This community-based research project was led by Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society, a community-led organization with a board of directors comprised of representatives from local Inuit organizations.ⁱ

The project utilized the Piliriqatigiinniq research model, a theoretical approach that centers “*working in a collaborative way for the common good*” (Healey & Tagak, 2014)ⁱⁱ to center the perspectives and concerns of Nunavummiut, capture their reported experiences, and center their priorities for an accessible Nunavut. Throughout all stages, the research project has been guided by community members and has remained responsive to feedback on how to best engage with and be informed by Nunavummiut.

To begin, the research team first secured a research license from the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI). NRI is the governing body for research activities in the territory and provides ethical supervision for research in Nunavut’s health, social sciences, and physical/natural sciences.ⁱⁱⁱ

The research team recruited participants through various methods appropriate for the remote context. Social media posts, including Facebook and Instagram, were essential for sharing information. In addition, the radio became an important means

i Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (2017, June 7). About NTI. <https://www.tunngavik.com/about/>

ii Healy, G., & Tagak Sr., A. (2014). PILIRIQATIGIINNIQ ‘Working in a collaborative way for the common good’: A perspective on the space where health research methodology and Inuit epistemology come together. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 7(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcis.v7i1.117>

iii Nunavut Research Institute. (n.d.). Nunavut Research Institute (NRI). <https://www.nri.nu.ca/>

of reaching community members to inform them about the project and how they could participate. Announcing visits well in advance was critical in giving community members time to learn more about the project and make arrangements, such as transportation and childcare. Participants had to be 18 years of age or older. People living with disability and those who provided care for someone living with a disability were invited to participate.

The research team sent letters to the Hamlet (municipality) offices to inform the mayor and local council of the project and upcoming visits.

One of the most significant additions to the project's recruitment strategy was the addition of Community Champions. As all 25 communities are remote, having a local contact was critical. Community Champions went on the radio to promote the project and upcoming visits, and posted flyers in town. Some Community Champions also conducted outreach on Facebook or contacted their networks. Community Champions were critical in identifying barriers between researchers and potential participants. They were trustworthy community members whom interested participants could approach for additional information. Community Champions also assisted the research team with inside information about community activities, such as the right time to visit and what might be happening locally that might impact research participants (such as a funeral occurring or a community event).

In addition to radio and social media promotion, when in community, the research team set up information tables in the local store. Being in-person allowed community members to meet the research team in advance and get more information about the project. At these information tables, many locals engaged in informal conversations about their own experiences with disability, which informed the project's findings through ethnographic field notes.

Community visits were critical to the methodology of this project, as in-person discussions were important for meaningful and deep engagements. Many Nunavummiut mentioned that they prefer in-person interactions with professionals and service

providers over virtual options. In addition, the presence of an interpreter was better facilitated in person.

Interpretation and translation services were vital to the project to ensure that respondents could choose the method of participation with which they were most comfortable. Interpretation was also critical in ensuring the transmission of culturally specific ideas and concepts, both from the respondent to the researcher, and from the researcher to the respondent.

Initially, the project planned to have all data collected through a series of “*sharing circles*”. However, feedback from many participants indicated a dislike for this term, as many felt it did not resonate with Inuit research priorities. In response to these community requests, “*sharing circles*” was changed to “*community discussions*,” which better reflected a more familiar and comfortable format akin to kitchen table discussions. This adjustment ensured that the methodology was more aligned with the preferences and cultural context of the participants, fostering a more inclusive and effective research process.

Further, after the first community visits, it became clear that adding individual interviews would facilitate greater participation for various reasons. Firstly, many participants could not attend group events due to schedule conflicts, lack of transportation, or difficulty leaving their homes. Also, many participants wished for more privacy than a group discussion could provide. Several participants did not feel comfortable discussing private information and preferred a confidential one-on-one scenario to share their stories. As such, the research team returned to NRI to add one-on-one, in-home, and virtual interviews to the research methodology. To facilitate greater participation, the research team also provided transportation where possible, but this was not always available in small communities that lacked accessible transportation options. The research team also continued to host group discussions and individual interviews, which led to a vibrant and diverse data set.

It should also be noted that a critical aspect of the research methodology was the formation of the project’s Advisory Committee. The committee was composed of 20 to 22 members at any given time, with representation from Nunavut’s

three territorial regions. The committee balanced gender representation and included people with disabilities, caretakers and family members, people with disabilities, and professional service providers. The committee was also a majority Nunavut beneficiary (Inuit) and includes non-beneficiary Nunavummiut (non-Inuit). The Advisory Committee provided guidance and direction on project objectives, activities, and community engagement.

A draft of this report was shared with the project's Advisory Committee and research participants to provide feedback. The final report was translated into English, French, Inuktitut and Innuinaqtun. NDMS plans to distribute printed copies of the report to all participating communities. Electronic copies will also be sent to participants who provided email addresses and be made available for free on our website.

Limitations

This project had several limitations stemming primarily from the remote nature of the territory, as each of Nunavut's 25 communities are distinct and fly-in only.

Although NDMS is a cross-territory organization, it does not have satellite offices in each community, so maintaining connections with all 25 communities can be challenging. In addition, Arctic communities experience research fatigue, with many researchers making demands on small communities of only several hundred people. While this project was the first of its kind on the topic, it was certainly not the first research study to visit the hamlets. In addition, due to funding limitations and research design, many research projects cannot return to communities to build long-term connections or bring research findings back for knowledge sharing. As a result of all of these factors, this project encountered limitations in connecting with community members under the auspices of a research agenda.

Language was another barrier in the research process, as the researchers spoke English exclusively. The research team is very grateful to the interpreters who participated in this project for facilitating participation in Inuktitut, French, and Inuktitut and American Sign Language.

Another constraint of this study was the limitations on privacy in a small community. While all efforts were taken to maintain the privacy and anonymity of participants, hosting group discussions and interviews in public buildings (albeit in private rooms) and with interpreters from within the community limited the privacy that participants could maintain.

Technical barriers arose for Nunavummiut who wished to participate virtually. Many Nunavummiut do not have access to reliable and affordable internet, so virtual interview opportunities were limited, and virtual group discussions were not feasible.

For phone interviews, connections were often of poor quality, so interview recordings were difficult to transcribe, and some meaning was lost. Also, the ability to host interviews via an interpreter over the phone was limited due to connection and scheduling issues.

The research for this report was extensive—questions covered all types of disability and many areas of interest. Due to time limitations, the researchers could not always explore topics at length. Many areas of discussion emerged in the data collection that would benefit from further study.

The scope of many of the discussions in this report often extend beyond the focus of Accessibility Standards Canada's areas of priority. While these standards are crucial for ensuring accessibility, they do not always address the unique challenges endured by individuals in various local contexts. For instance, there are notable deficiencies in public transportation and accessible taxi services. These deficiencies create substantial barriers for individuals with disabilities, impacting their ability to travel to essential locations, including airports that are under federal jurisdiction. Without acknowledging and tackling these interconnected problems, efforts to improve accessibility may be inadequate, leaving significant gaps in the support system for individuals with disabilities. Therefore, while ASC standards provide a vital framework, their effective implementation must consider and adapt to local realities to enhance accessibility for all Canadians.

Study Details

NDMS visited all 25 communities across the territory to hold group discussions and conduct interviews and offered virtual sessions to accommodate those who

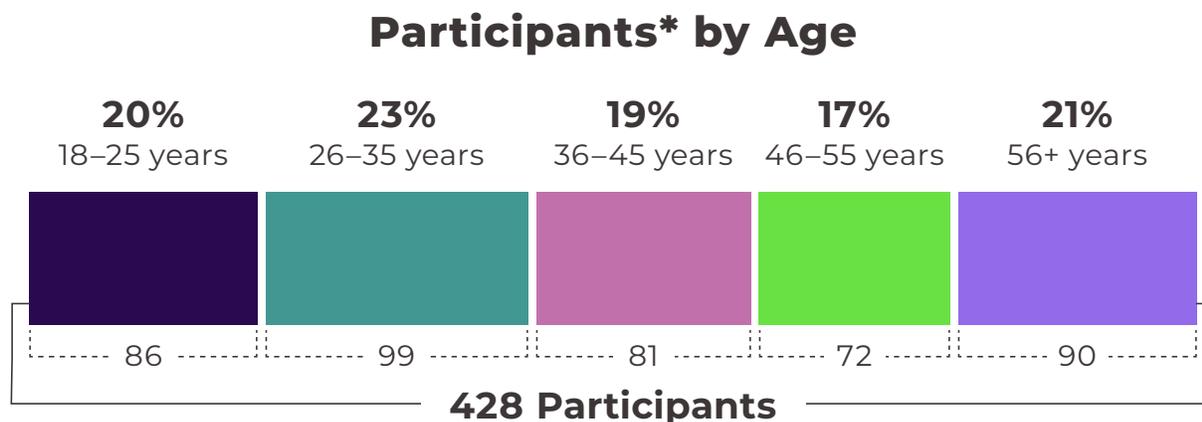
preferred to participate online. The research team interviewed 543 Nunavummiut in total. A demographic survey was administered, although not all participants completed it. Survey participation was optional, and many respondents opted out. As such, it is important to acknowledge that the following representations of our participant pool may be limited, as only a percentage of all respondents provided demographic information.

Age

The study had a relatively even distribution of age groups across participants, who ranged in age from 18 to 88.

FIGURE 2 Participants* by Age

The study engaged a relatively even distribution across all eligible age groups. In many cases the research team interviewed 2 or 3 generations of a family.



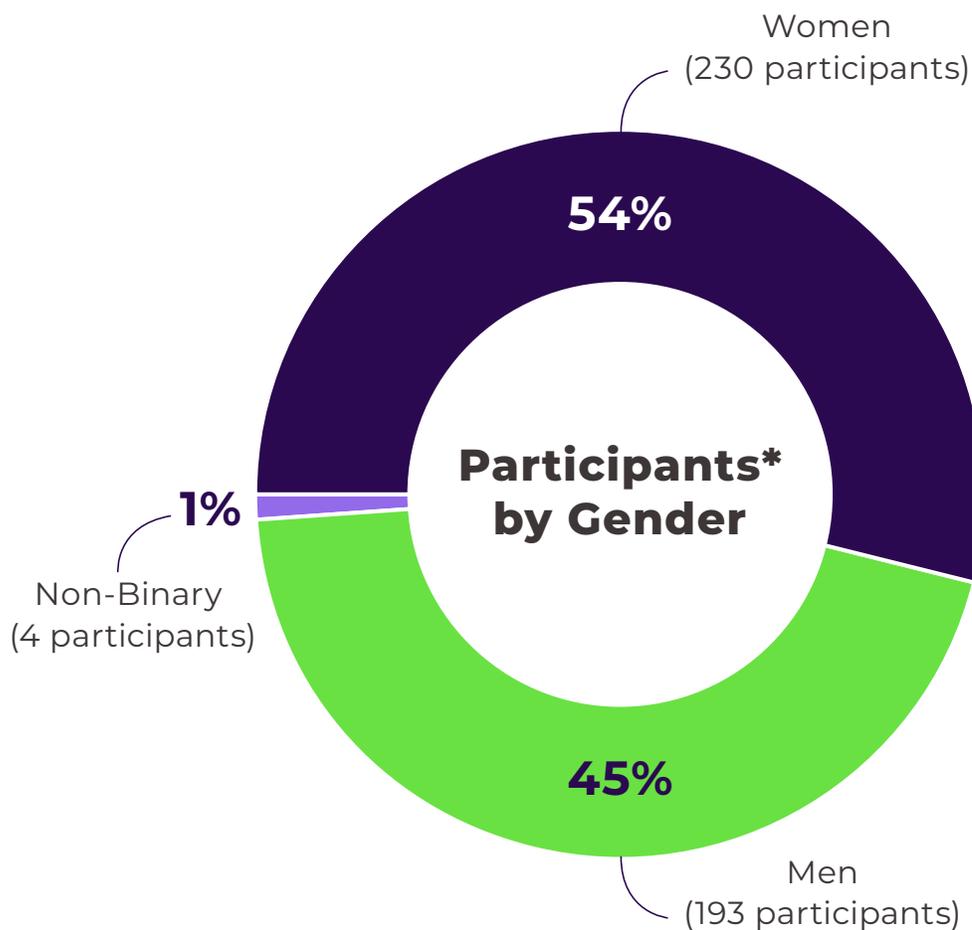
* Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary. The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Gender

The pool of respondents had a balance of women and men, and a small percentage of non-binary participants.

FIGURE 3 Participants* by Gender

Distribution of men and women in the participant pool was close to even, with slightly more representation of women. A small percentage of participants identified as non-binary.

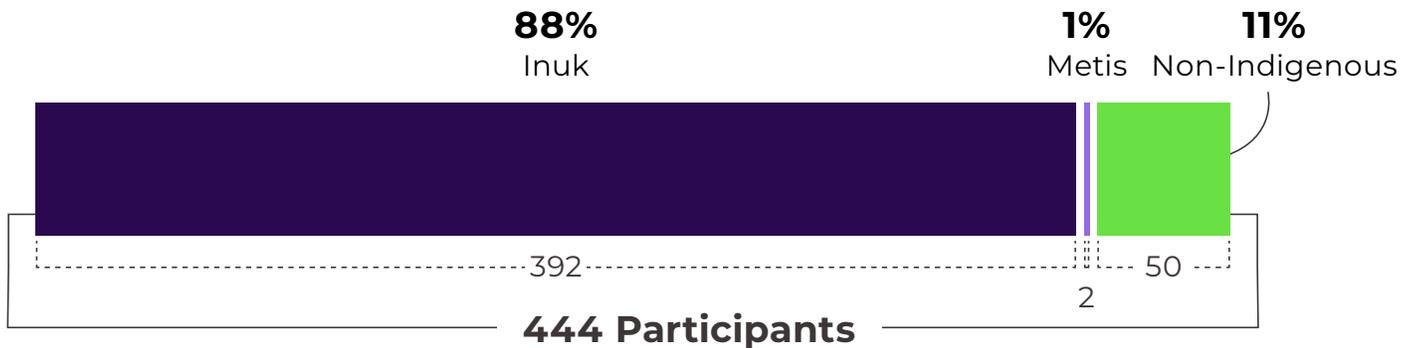


*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary. The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Indigenous Identity

The majority of our participants (88%), identified themselves as Inuk. This is in line with the demographics of Nunavut.

FIGURE 4 Participants* by Indigenous Identity

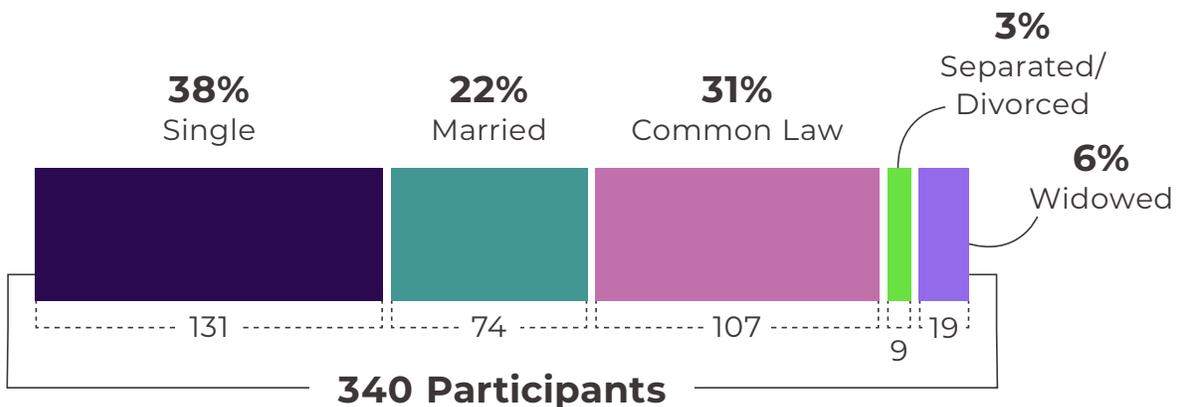


*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary.
The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Marital Status

Participants reported a range of marital status, with the majority of participants indicating that they were single (38%) followed by common law (31%).

FIGURE 5 Participants* by Marital Status

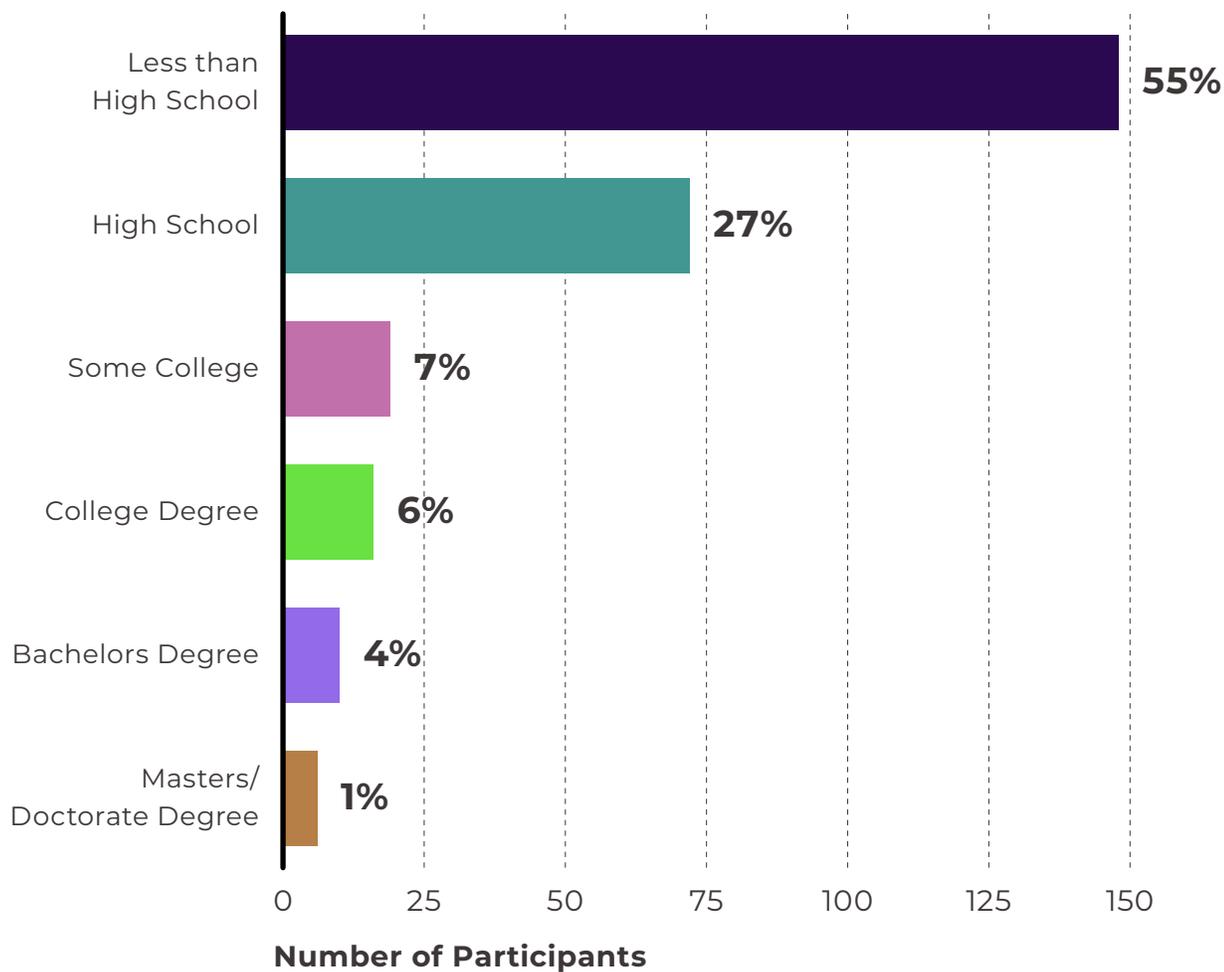


*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary.
The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Education

Participants had a variety of education levels, with a majority of participants indicating that they had less than a high school education.

FIGURE 6 Participants* by Education Level



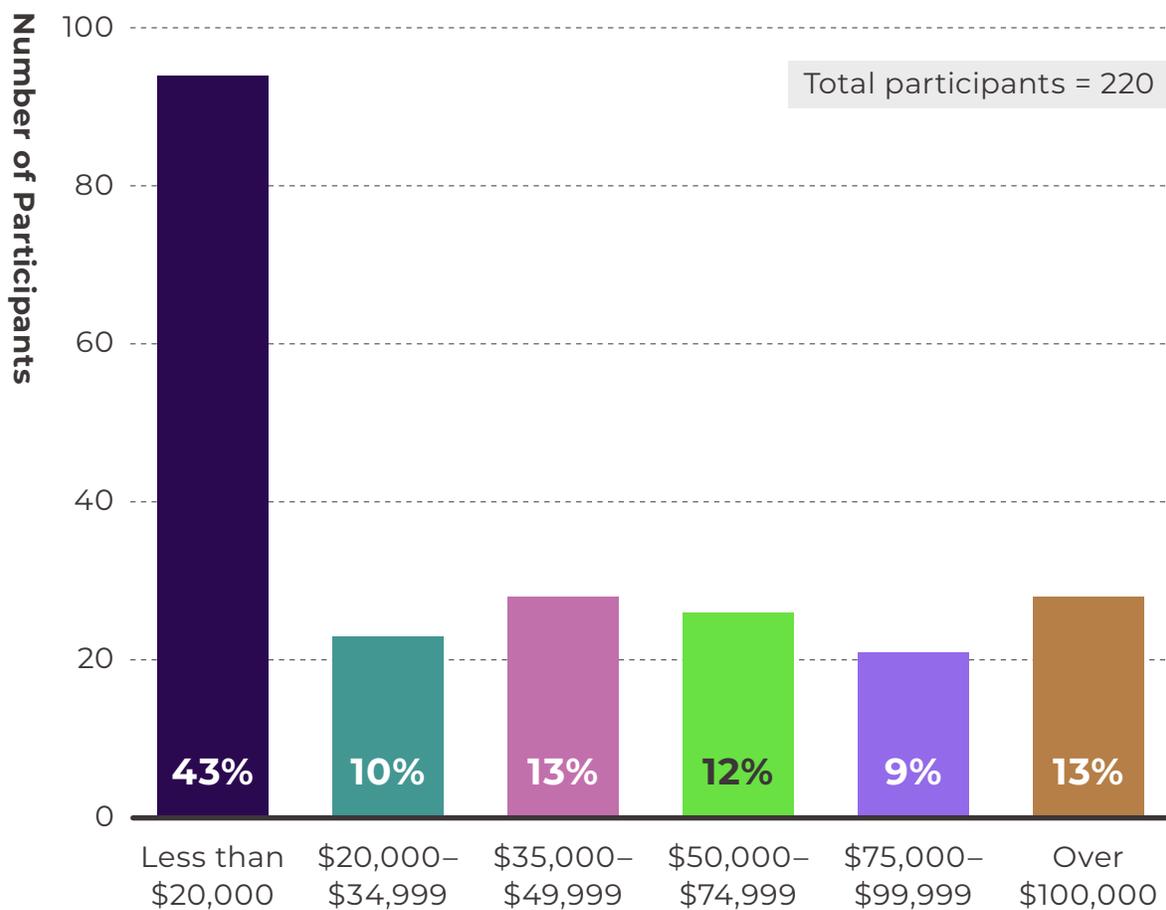
*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary. The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Household Income

A variety of household incomes were represented in the study, with the largest percentage reporting a household income under \$20,000/year. It should also be noted that several participants indicate confusion at this question because their households could include multiple family members and friends.

FIGURE 7 Participants* by Household Income

This may not be an accurate reflection of household income, as many respondents were confused on how to define "household".

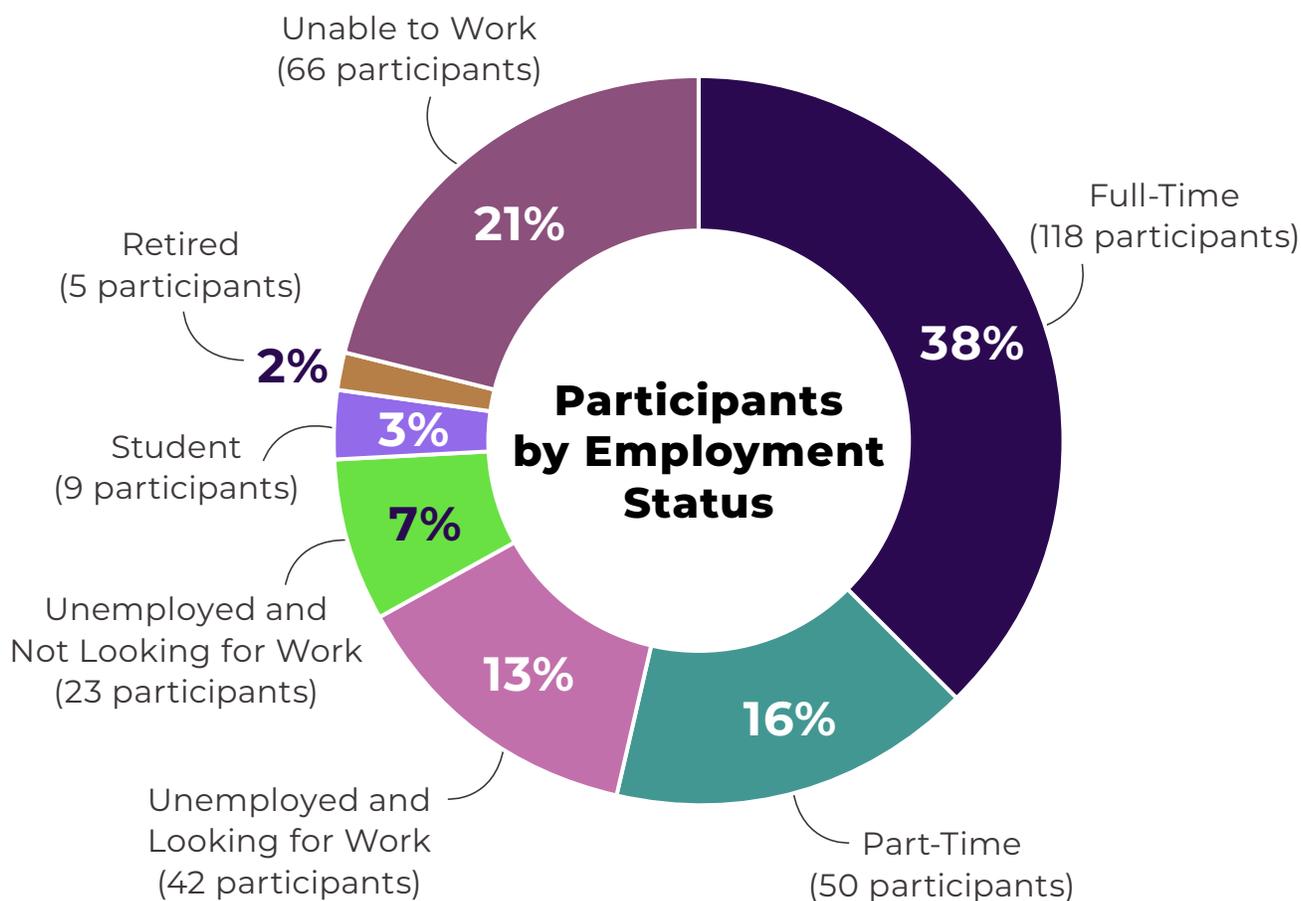


*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary. The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.

Employment

Approximately 313 participants reported on their employment status. A large percentage (31%) reported working full time. A significantly large percentage (21%), reported being unable to work.

FIGURE 8 Participants* by Employment Status



*Note: Participation in the demographic survey was voluntary. The following data represents the demographic information of those who chose to take part.



Discussion

The following discussion integrates insights from interviews and group discussions conducted with Nunavummiut.

The findings represent participants' collective responses concerning the seven priority areas of Accessibility Standards Canada, including; employment, the built environment, communication, procurement, programs and services, information and communication technology, and transportation. These Standards are further outlined in Appendix B.

Because this project intends to amplify and honour the perspectives of Nunavummiut with disabilities, this discussion will feature many direct quotes from respondents.

Insights from study participants are crucial in understanding what is needed to create and maintain a fully accessible and inclusive Nunavut. Many participants emphasized that their communities are places of belonging and care. They shared a vision for a healthy and accessible community for all, underscoring that improvements to infrastructure will support Nunavummiut in achieving this vision of inclusion.

Canada would benefit from accessibility standards that embrace the welcoming and inclusive spirit of Nunavut's 25 communities.

81%

**discussed
transportation,**
making this the
most important issue
for Nunavummiut.

80% discussed accessible and quality
programs and services as an issue.

About this study

Over 3 years, we visited all
25 communities and spoke
to 543 Nunavummiut about
Accessibility.

Conversations took place
in groups (sharing circles),
and one-on-one interviews.

We spoke to Nunavummiut
aged 18–88, of all genders.

88% of our participants
were Inuk (Inuit).



**“Too few community members with disabilities
can fully participate in the community. No, I
think the one(s) with disabilities don’t even go
out (and) participate in anything... they have no
transportation [and] the elders that can barely
walk... we need an Elders’ bus.”**

7

Research areas focused on Accessibility Standards Canada's priorities:

Employment

Nunavummiut experience barriers to employment, such as stigma regarding disabilities and a lack of awareness about workplace accommodations.

Approximately 53% of the participants who completed the survey, indicated that they are engaged in full-time or part-time employment. Work was described by many as enjoyable and fulfilling.

Built environment

Nunavummiut want safe and accessible housing and public spaces. They want new builds to include ramps, wider doorways, accessible washrooms and safety features.

Public spaces, particularly recreational and outdoor spaces, are inaccessible. Nunavummiut want improved conditions so they can enjoy recreation and on-the-land activities.

Communication

Improvements in communication from service providers and government agencies are desired.

Participants spoke about difficulty accessing benefits and services because processes were unclear. Accessible and transparent systems that utilize plain language are needed.

Procurement

Participants want more representation of people with disabilities in decision making and increased transparency around how funds are allocated.

Programs and services

People with disabilities in Nunavut want programs and services that are made with their needs in mind, and are offered long-term.

Nunavummiut are looking for opportunities to participate in hunting, sewing, and community games

Information and communication technology

Affordable and reliable internet access is needed in Nunavut to ensure access to programs, services, education, and employment opportunities.

Transportation

Nunavut's 25 communities lack accessible transportation options. It was the most discussed concern in our interviews and focus groups.

Nunavummiut want affordable and accessible public transportation made available for Elders and people with disabilities.

Employment

Canada’s accessibility standard for employment addresses barriers encountered by people with disabilities throughout their employment journey.



Eeta’s Employment

Eeta works at the Northern Store.

Her coworkers keep the ramp clear of snow and ice for her, and she has a large desk that fits her wheelchair.

Eeta takes sick days when she is in too much pain. Her manager understands that this is an accommodation.

Eeta likes her job and wishes her manager would talk with her about a promotion.

“ [Employers] can support by offering more accommodations, like providing training and support. So many times people aren’t given the things they need at all.”

— Study participant

Currently in its draft form, this standard outlines requirements for organizations to develop comprehensive systems, policies, and practices that support accessibility and inclusion. It emphasizes leadership commitment, measurable objectives, and clear roles to foster a supportive workplace culture. Additionally, it advocates for the implementation of a disability management system to address accommodation needs effectively.ⁱ

The draft standard focuses on;

- Ensuring accessible information about accommodations and training opportunities.
- Facilitating inclusive recruitment processes and strategies for job retention.
- Developing policies and practices to accommodate diverse needs.
- Promoting equitable opportunities for professional growth and advancement.

ⁱ Accessibility Standards Canada. (n.d.). CAN-ASC-1.1 Draft standard on employment. <https://accessible.canada.ca/can-asc-1-1>

FIGURE 9 Eeta’s employment

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

“ People have like, ideas about disabled people and what they can’t do. But they just need help to be more support and then they do, you know, can do anything at all.”

— Study participant

The standard’s focus on addressing employment challenges experienced by people with disabilities is particularly crucial in regions like Nunavut, where unique geographical and cultural factors significantly impact accessibility and inclusion in the workforce. For instance, based on the 2021 Census, 60,235 individuals self-identified as Indigenous, comprising 51.0% of the population in Canada’s three territories. However, the labour force participation among the Territories’ Indigenous population is notably lower than that of the non-Indigenous population. In Nunavut, the Indigenous population experiences the lowest participation rate in Canada, standing at 52.3%.ⁱⁱ

In 2021, the unemployment rate for Yukon and the Northwest Territories (NWT) was lower than in the provinces at 7.5%; Yukon (5.5%) and NWT (5.2%), yet was higher in Nunavut (10.1%).ⁱⁱⁱ More recent statistics put Nunavut’s unemployment rate at 11.3%, the highest in the country.^{iv}

ii Government of Canada. (2023). Economic Scan - Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut: 2023. <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/job-market-reports/nunavut/environmental-scan>

iii Statistics Canada. (n.d.). Statistics Canada labour force survey - What it’s all about - Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/sites/default/files/north-brochure-nord-eng.pdf>

iv Government of Canada. (2024). Canadian territories (Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut), May 2024 - Job market snapshot. <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/trend-analysis/job-market-reports/nt/job-market-snapshot>

Indigenous people also have higher rates of disability than non-Indigenous people.^v Specifically, the rate of disability for Indigenous people in Canada is 30-35%, compared to 22% for non-Indigenous people. The rate in Inuit communities is estimated to be even higher. For example, Statistics Canada research indicated that 1 in 3 Métis people and First Nations people living off-reserve have a disability, and one in five Inuit live with a disability.^{vi}

In Nunavut, Indigenous peoples make up the largest proportion of the population, compared to any other territory or province at 86%, (and 85% of that percentage are Inuit).^{vii} While there are limited statistics on the number of Nunavummiut living with disabilities, many community services in Nunavut, including NDMS, believe that the number of Inuit with disabilities in this territory is much higher than what Statistics Canada reports, with estimates closer to 90% of the Inuit population.^{viii}

As such, the employment landscape in Nunavut presents significant challenges and opportunities for improvement. Employment was discussed in 48% of the conversations conducted for this study. Participants are most concerned with barriers to finding and maintaining employment (37% of all conversations), with accommodations as the next area of focus (26% of discussions). Overall, participants expressed enjoyment from paid work and wished that some of the barriers they encountered could be removed to access new and better employment opportunities.

Some respondents shared positive experiences of receiving accommodations in the workplace, while others encountered significant challenges with employers who seemed to be

v Hahmann, T., Badets, N., & Hughes, J. (2019). Indigenous people with disabilities in Canada: First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit aged 15 years and older. Statistics Canada.

vi Hahmann, Badets, & Hughes (2019)

vii Government of Canada; Indigenous Services Canada. (2020, November 3). Annual report to parliament 2020. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1602010609492/1602010631711>

viii NDMS. (n.d.). Definition of disability. Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society. <https://nuability.ca/definition-of-disability/>

ill-prepared to accommodate them. Few respondents reported on employment in terms of careers or long-term advancement. However, the potential for growth and development in the employment market is evident, which could open up new opportunities for working Nunavummiut.

Employment was discussed in 48% of the conversations conducted for this study. Participants are most concerned with barriers to finding and maintaining employment (37% of all conversations).

Finding and Keeping a Job

Many participants expressed concern that there are not enough jobs available in the North, especially jobs that are comfortable, safe, or desirable for people living with disabilities. Informants expressed wanting paid employment to feel a sense of purpose, provide for their families, and contribute to their community.

“Especially when there’s not no jobs up north. [The] unemployment rate is very high. People are - many people want to work, aren’t able to find a job. And, yeah it’s harder for people with mental health, especially Nunavut with our unemployment rate, to find jobs or to find work.”

Many respondents expressed that there are too many barriers to employment and feel discouraged. Participants reported that stigma and discrimination on the part of employers limited their employment opportunities.

“I have tried to find a job but cannot get hired due to my disability.”

Other barriers to employment included a lack of childcare options, lack of training and education opportunities, and the need for more qualifications or experience. For instance, the workday typically starts at 8:30 am and ends at 5:00 pm. However, many schools in the territory do not begin until 9:00 am. This discrepancy creates a significant challenge for parents

seeking employment, especially given the territory's limited availability of childcare services. In many communities, there is a complete lack of childcare options, compounding the difficulty for working parents who must find ways to bridge the gap between their work schedules and their children's school hours. This issue highlights a critical barrier to employment for many residents, particularly in remote or under-served areas where child care resources are scarce or non-existent. Lack of transportation in communities was also cited as a barrier to employment.

Participants also desired more in-community services to support their job search or career development. This includes help with resume-building or short-term skill-building opportunities. In cases where participants had used a service of this nature, they were happy with the outcome and felt it was helpful. Specialized skills training (for example, first aid/CPR, driver's license training) was also cited as desirable as it would help with job eligibility and broaden job search options.

"We need a lot more training programs to help people learn new skills and get better jobs even [...] and staff at places should have special training too. If staff are trained properly, they can provide better care or even help to people. Like it can be for nurses or even people at the [store]."

Discrimination at the hiring phase was also discussed. Respondents felt hiring managers would rather hire a non-disabled person out of convenience. In small communities where everyone is known, many participants felt potential employers would avoid hiring them because they knew their barriers. Those seeking employment outside of the community noticed a shift in attitude during the hiring process when the employer found out they might need accommodation.

"I submitted an application online to their recruitment department. They gave me a phone call [...] and then I mentioned I'm disabled and they, and you could kind of hear the person on the other line go, "oh". And then I tried to explain what my disability meant. And, you know, it will be no issue in this role [...] But after that point, I

said, what my, I had a disability, immediately the tone shifted [...] I didn't feel I had the opportunity to explain my situation, I didn't feel they were engaged enough to say, okay, well, what can we do for you?"

Participants felt that their disability, whether disclosed or already known, was immediately used to weed them out of the candidate pool. Nunavummiut who participated in this study want more inclusive hiring practices and policies, including practices that focus on the potential and capacity of the individual and seek to remove barriers to accommodation. As one participant put it, managers need to *"make the job fit the person, not the person fit the job."*

Overall, Nunavummiut want their communities do a better job of removing barriers so that everyone can participate in employment, community service, and other forms of community life.

"If we, if we look at the IQ principle for a moment, can we look at the very last one that says we have respect for the environment, for the land and for the animals. They don't see a barrier; they don't see a boundary [...] Although we recognize that there is this invisible boundary. We still need to allow those who have the desire and the ability to provide assistance of a service. To give them support."

Depression can be a significant barrier for people who are job searching, which was mentioned repeatedly. Nunavummiut with disabilities may feel alone and isolated. Many participants mentioned not knowing who to ask for help. For Nunavummiut with disabilities, these barriers are compounded by the unique challenges of living in a remote and often under-resourced region. The systemic lack of accessibility in workplaces can trigger or worsen mental health issues. This is not just about physical accessibility, but also about creating inclusive environments where individuals with disabilities feel valued and supported.

"Most people with disabilities do have co-morbidities [...] And particularly with my disability. The incidence of co-morbidities, of anxiety and depression are quite high."

I experience both of those things. And truthfully, I had never experienced depression until a lack of accessibility, really, in the system in which I work, kind of pushed me into a really serious mental health breakdown.”

Additional support is needed to navigate the job application process. Respondents noted that job advertisements can be wordy and confusing and are often only available in English, so people are less inclined to apply or need help understanding the job requirements.

Participants expressed difficulty finding desirable jobs, especially with barriers like stigma, discrimination, lack of childcare, and lack of transportation. They highlighted a need for more in-community services to support job searches and career development, including training programs and assistance with resumes. The stigma people experience and the barriers to accommodation were significant issues, underscoring the need for more inclusive practices.

Many participants highlighted the need for job opportunities within their communities. They pointed out that the limited economic infrastructure and isolation from larger markets result in fewer employment options, making it challenging for Nunavummiut to find meaningful and sustainable work. This lack of opportunities not only affects individual livelihoods but also impacts the overall economic development and well-being of the community.

Accommodations

Approximately 53% of the participants who completed the survey (or 31% of all participants) indicated they were engaged in full-time or part-time employment. Several individuals reported that they can work, are happy in their jobs, and feel supported by their coworkers and employers. Several respondents stated that they disagree that there is workplace or hiring discrimination against people with disabilities.

Awareness of workers' rights and resources is essential for employees to feel confident in being appropriately accommodated. Workplace policies, human resources, and union

appeals were all mentioned at least once. Many individuals, however, have experienced difficulty being accommodated in the workplace. Respondents reported refusals to accommodate and unrealistic expectations about performance. Many participants shared that they do not currently receive accommodations in their workplace but did not disclose if they requested accommodations or the nature of the accommodation that would support them.

“A lot of my employers that I had in the past would constantly expect me to perform like everyone else when, when I could not, when I cannot. So that was one big challenge for me.”

One individual reported that they tried to take action with their union and appealed the refusal to accommodate. The union was unsure about the process because it was the first time anyone had brought this concern forward. This person had to figure it out themselves and work with the union to teach them simultaneously.

“...my first experience with my employer, asking for accommodations, went terribly. And then it was like, how do I appeal this with my union? And the union said, well, we’re not really even sure. It’s like nobody’s gone through this process before. And the answer was a form. You write a, not a form, you write a letter to somebody you’ve never met and don’t know. And I said, “that’s not going to work for me.” So then worked with them to get the ability to basically file, or create my own appeal process [...] I had to create this whole process myself.”

This, however, was not universal. A few respondents reported positive experiences requesting accommodations:

“I think it’s also, it’s about making things work for everyone or at least trying to. When I started working at (redacted) I asked for headphones because it was so loud and I was having anxiety and they gave me headphones. It helped so much and when I got used to everything I could work without the headphones. But it’s all these small things that make a difference too for people.”

Accessibility concerns include barriers to education. One person expressed that most service jobs, such as cashiers, require standing for hours, which many people cannot do. However, for “desk-sitting jobs,” you might need a degree or diploma, which the respondent also felt was inaccessible to many people, including themselves. In Nunavut, pursuing further education is particularly challenging due to limited local academic resources, financial constraints, and geographical isolation. The region has fewer post-secondary institutions than more densely populated areas, limiting local higher education opportunities. Additionally, the cost of education, including tuition, materials, and living expenses, can be prohibitive, especially given the higher cost of living in remote areas. Attending university often means relocating far from home, which for many is not always feasible.

“A lot of my employers that I had in the past would constantly expect me to perform like everyone else when, when I could not, when I cannot. So that was one big challenge for me.”

These accessibility issues have broader implications, restricting economic participation for people with disabilities and leading to higher rates of unemployment and underemployment among this population, which contributes to poverty and economic disparity. The frustration and stress stemming from these barriers can negatively impact mental health, leading to feelings of inadequacy, depression, and isolation. Additionally, when a significant portion of the population is excluded from contributing to the local economy due to accessibility issues, it hinders overall community development and prosperity.

Environmental factors such as temperature, lighting, and noise were also mentioned as things that many people might struggle with in the workplace.

“I have a lot of sensory sensitivities. So light and sound, temperature and touch. And those can be really difficult to navigate outside of the confines of my home. So kind of any time you’re in public, but especially in a workplace situation where you are like 8 hours of the day [...] Those things really have, can have, a huge impact on me.”

“Sometimes it’s hard with the cold, with the cold weather.”

A lack of awareness around the disabling impacts of mental illnesses can also impact people’s workplace experiences. For example, an individual with bipolar disorder expressed that they felt dismissed by their employer when explaining that it is best for them to stay home when they are having a particularly difficult day. Several people said employers should be more aware of disabilities and how they may impact someone’s work life. It was also requested that employers have more education and awareness about appropriate ways to accommodate and build safe and happy work environments for everyone.

“And it can be very inaccessible, especially to like autistic people, because the unspoken social rules. There is no guide. You don’t get handed a book that says this is how to keep your job and not offend your coworkers [...] And these things that come second nature to some don’t come second nature to everyone.”

“[Employers] can support by offering more accommodations, like providing training and support. So many times, people aren’t given the things they need at all.”

Lack of accessibility in the workplace was cited multiple times as a cause of depression and negative mental health states. Feeling discouraged and anxious about work often came up in discussion. Respondents reported wanting support to feel more confident in the workplace.

“I think having someone you can go to to help you or ask questions, maybe not your boss but like, someone you work with and I know that having a support network there at the office or in the workplace would be really helpful for everyone. Like, having someone I could talk to about my challenges and get advice from would make me feel more confident about working and you don’t feel bad asking questions all the time.”

Several respondents expressed a need for support to navigate the workplace environment as a social location. As one

community member discussed, some people could use support to navigate inexplicit social rules in the work environment.

“I don’t wanna say common sense. But I think, nowadays, common sense has to be taught. So like teaching people to work in the workplace setting, like an office. What’s appropriate, what’s not appropriate like words, words to, not to use, typing skills or whatnot [...] Having somebody - like tact is a big thing that Inuit have a problem with. Like some of them don’t have filters and they might say the wrong words which end up getting them fired. And they didn’t know any better that it was the wrong thing to say.”

Respondents want more wrap-around support for Nunavummiut with disabilities in the workplace. Ensuring that workers have access to skills-based training, emotional and mental health support, and information and awareness on accommodations while also removing barriers such as a lack of childcare or transportation, would contribute to more Nunavummiut benefiting from employment opportunities in their communities.

While some reported positive experiences, many experienced challenges such as unrealistic performance expectations and a lack of awareness about disability impacts. The need for better accommodation processes, mental health support, and employer education on disabilities was emphasized to create a supportive work environment.

Career Development

Nunavummiut have concerns about hiring norms in the territory. Participants indicated that they want the hiring of locals to be prioritized across all sectors. Many reported that positions in their communities were often held by Southerners working on contract. It should be noted that under the Nunavut Lands Claim Agreement (NLCA), hiring priority should be given to beneficiaries, and many government departments and Inuit organizations are explicit in their commitment to prioritize the hiring of Inuit.^{ix}

Participants noted that accommodations need to be made

ix Article 23. Nunavut Agreement. (n.d.). https://nlca.tunnngavik.com/?page_id=2301

to ensure that Nunavummiut are eligible for positions and feel encouraged and welcome to apply. Job postings should be advertised in Inuktut, posted in local, high-visibility areas, and equivalencies should be accepted. Additional education opportunities may also be required to prepare individuals for high-skilled positions.

“It would be helpful to have better communication about what other job opportunities are here and how to access support services and maybe having more training for like, on the job and maybe even programs for everyone’s own needs and to the needs of people with disabilities especially would make a big difference.”

Many participants felt employers were more concerned with filling positions than supporting local employment. Another concern noted by participants was that employers prefer to hire non-disabled people rather than provide accommodations for people with disabilities. Several respondents felt that this form of discrimination stems from hiring managers seeking convenience.

“I think sometimes the stigma of where they are staying plays a role. Second thing, I think people just, I think sometimes I feel like our clients need to also be trained to advocate better for themselves [...] But more like I think the employer just doesn’t want to hire because they need to get a job done.”

A few participants mentioned wanting more training opportunities offered by their employer, such as mentorship or workshops. Some people wish there were more opportunities and resources for job training, resume development and skills building. Communities that have career development programs would like an expansion of their services, including events like resume writing workshops.

“They could help us by offering more training programs so we can learn more about the job or maybe have someone that can help us on the job too and it could teach us skills we need for different jobs, making it easier for us to find work or even things we like. Like they can help us get our license that would help with some jobs.”

“We also need help with finding jobs and like, doing a resume and finding a place to apply. There needs to be more of that here.”

Some respondents wanted employers do a better job helping workers keep their skills up to date. This approach recognizes that skills can become outdated due to technological advancements, changes in industry standards, or evolving job requirements. By offering refresher courses, employers can help their workforce stay relevant and competitive, boosting job satisfaction and retention while ensuring organizational agility and efficiency.

From an organizational perspective, investing in ongoing skill development initiatives enhances the capabilities of individual employees and strengthens the overall workforce. It fosters a culture of learning and growth within the company, promoting innovation and adaptability in response to market changes. Additionally, it demonstrates a commitment to employee development and well-being, which can improve morale and loyalty among staff members.

“Like the (employer) here they have a work readiness program that you have to take that course even before you work there or I don’t think they will even pay you. But you have to do this work readiness course and they should have a work readiness course given to like the complete public open to whenever or like say like refresher course every three years or something.”

IQ Values

Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) principles, or societal values, reflect the Inuit way of knowing and encompass core values, beliefs, and practices.ⁱ

Pijitsirniq (Service and providing for family and/or community)

Aajiiqatigiinni (Discussion and Consensus Decision Making)

Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq (Skills and Knowledge Acquisition through observation, mentoring, practice and effort)

Qanuqtuurniq (Resourcefulness and Innovative Problem Solving)

Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (Respect and care for the land, animals and the Environment)

Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtigiinni (Collaboration and Working Together for a Common Cause)

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (Respecting Others, Relationships and Caring for People): The practice of fostering good relationships and treating others with respect and kindness.

Tunnganarniq (Fostering Good Spirit by Being Open, Welcoming and Inclusive): The practice of being open, welcoming, and inclusive.

ⁱ Department of Culture and Heritage, Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Katimajit and Tuttarviit. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/inuit-qaujimagatuqangit-katimajit-and-tuttarviit>



Canada's Accessibility Standard for Employment, while comprehensive in scope, needs adaptation to serve Nunavut effectively. This is particularly pressing given the high rates of disability among Inuit in the territory, who also experience lower labour force participation rates and higher unemployment compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Our findings underscore that while some Nunavummiut experience supportive workplaces, many encounter formidable barriers. These include overt discrimination during hiring processes, inadequate or non-existent accommodations, and a lack of accessible training and job opportunities. Participants expressed a need for jobs that provide a sense of purpose and are safe, comfortable, and respectful of their abilities and circumstances.

IQ Values and Employment

Connecting the employment insights from interviews and group discussions to the underlying Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles reveals a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges experienced by Nunavummiut with disabilities in the workforce. These principles, deeply rooted in Inuit culture and values, offer a guiding framework for addressing the employment barriers highlighted by participants, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

One of the fundamental IQ principles is Pijitsirniq, which emphasizes serving and providing for the community. This principle aligns with the participants' expressed desire for meaningful employment that allows them to contribute to their families and communities. Many participants articulated a sense of purpose derived from paid work and a strong inclination to be productive members of their communities despite having significant barriers. These barriers include a lack of available jobs, especially those that are comfortable and safe for people with disabilities, which hinder their ability to serve and support their communities effectively. Addressing these employment challenges by creating more job opportunities and supportive work environments would not only fulfil the principle of Pijitsirniq but also enhance the overall well-being and cohesion of the community.

The principle of Aajiiqatigiinniq, which involves decision-making through discussion and consensus, is particularly relevant to the issues of discrimination and stigma in hiring practices. Participants reported that employers often prefer to hire non-disabled individuals out of convenience, which reflects a lack of inclusive dialogue and understanding. Implementing Aajiiqatigiinniq within the workplace means fostering open discussions about the capabilities and needs of individuals with disabilities, allowing for a more inclusive and equitable hiring process. By involving all stakeholders in these discussions, employers can develop a deeper understanding of the barriers experienced by disabled employees and work collectively to create more accommodating and supportive work environments. This collaborative approach can help dismantle the stigma and discrimination that impedes many Nunavummiut from securing employment.

Piliriqatigiinni, or working together for a common cause, is another IQ principle that resonates with the need for more in-community services to support job searches and career development. Participants expressed a desire for local training programs, resume-building assistance, and skill-building opportunities tailored to their needs. The principle of Piliriqatigiinni encourages collaborative efforts to create and implement these support services, ensuring they are accessible and effective. By working together, communities can develop robust support systems that help individuals with disabilities navigate the job market and enhance their employability. This collective effort improves individual employment outcomes and strengthens community bonds and resilience.

The insights also reflect the principle of Avatimik Kamattiarniq, which involves respecting the environment, including the social environment of the workplace. Participants highlighted the importance of accommodating diverse needs, such as providing a supportive environment for mental health, addressing sensory sensitivities, and ensuring physical accessibility. By respecting and adapting to these needs, employers can create inclusive workplaces where all employees feel valued and supported. This principle underscores the necessity of developing workplace policies and practices that accommodate the diverse requirements of Nunavummiut with disabilities, fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, the principle of respecting others and maintaining harmonious relationships, is essential for addressing the reported lack of awareness and understanding of disabilities among employers. Participants noted that employers often have unrealistic expectations and fail to recognize the impact of disabilities on work performance. By embracing Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, employers can cultivate a more empathetic and supportive approach, prioritizing respectful interactions and understanding. This involves educating employers about disabilities, encouraging patience, and fostering an environment where employees feel safe to discuss their needs and challenges. Respectful and informed interactions can significantly improve the workplace experience for disabled employees, promoting their retention and satisfaction.

Finally, the principle of Qanuqtuurniq, which encourages innovation and resourcefulness, is crucial for developing creative solutions to the employment barriers experienced by Nunavummiut with disabilities. Participants expressed a need for employers to be more flexible and innovative in their approach to accommodations and support. This could include developing new training programs, implementing mentorship opportunities, and creating flexible job roles that align with the abilities and circumstances of disabled employees. By applying Qanuqtuurniq, employers and communities can devise innovative strategies that not only meet the immediate needs of disabled individuals but also contribute to long-term improvements in employment accessibility and inclusivity.

The employment insights gathered from Nunavummiut with disabilities can be effectively addressed by integrating the principles of Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit. These principles provide a culturally relevant framework emphasizing community support, inclusive decision-making, collaborative efforts, respect for diverse needs, harmonious relationships, and innovative solutions. By aligning employment strategies with these principles, stakeholders can create a more inclusive and supportive employment landscape in Nunavut, ultimately enhancing the well-being and economic participation of Nunavummiut with disabilities.

Recommendations

Based on our study's findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance employment accessibility and inclusivity for Nunavummiut with disabilities in Nunavut. These recommendations aim to address the unique challenges experienced by this population and promote a more equitable employment landscape.

- 1. Enhance Community-Based Employment Services:**
Expanding in-community services is essential to better support job searches and career development. This includes offering resume-building workshops, short-term skill-building opportunities, and specialized training like first aid and driver's license programs. Establishing accessible job centres in each community could provide tailored support for individuals with

disabilities, assisting them with job applications and accessing employment resources effectively.

2. **Improve Accessibility and Accommodations in the Workplace:** It is crucial to implement comprehensive workplace policies that mandate reasonable accommodations specific to Nunavut for employees with disabilities. This ensures their needs are met without hardship and promotes an inclusive workforce through awareness and training for employers. Encouraging roles adaptable to employees' abilities rather than rigid job descriptions fosters a supportive work environment.
3. **Foster Inclusive Recruitment Practices:** Ensure job postings are accessible in Inuktitut and English, advertised widely within communities, and prioritize hiring Inuit with disabilities under the Nunavut Lands Claim Agreement. Inclusive recruitment strategies should actively seek diverse candidates to enhance workforce representation.
4. **Address Barriers to Employment:** Invest in local childcare, mental health services, and transportation options to remove common barriers preventing employment. Providing robust support for mental well-being and addressing the compounding effects of unemployment and workplace stress is essential.
5. **Promote Professional Development and Continuous Learning:** Offer ongoing training, mentorship programs, and career development workshops to enhance skills and support career progression. This includes adapting programs to meet linguistic and educational accessibility needs.
6. **Increase Awareness and Education on Disability Rights:** Conduct community outreach and educational campaigns to raise awareness about disability rights and promote inclusivity in the workplace. Provide resources for employees and employers to advocate for necessary accommodations, ensuring legal compliance and supportive workplace environments.
7. **Implement a Disability Management System:** Develop and maintain a structured system within organizations to address accommodation needs effectively. This

includes clear procedures for accommodation requests, designated support contacts, and regular evaluations to ensure effectiveness.

8. Incorporate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and Inuit Societal Values: Integrate IQ principles into workplace policies to create culturally respectful environments. Engage with Inuit Elders and community leaders to embed these values into organizational culture, promoting understanding and collaboration.
9. Monitor and Evaluate Employment Programs: Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation to assess program effectiveness in meeting the needs of Inuit with disabilities. Use feedback to continuously improve and adapt services, ensuring they remain responsive to community needs.

Addressing these nuanced issues involves more than mere compliance; it requires fostering a culture of inclusivity that recognizes and values the contributions of all Nunavummiut. Prioritizing local hiring, offering comprehensive training and support, creating inclusive workplace cultures, ensuring effective accommodations, providing holistic community support, and demonstrating strong leadership are essential components of this initiative. These efforts pave the way for meaningful employment opportunities that enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities while strengthening Nunavut's social and economic fabric for the benefit of the entire community.

The path forward demands a concerted effort to dismantle barriers and build a more inclusive labour market in Nunavut. By doing so, we ensure that all individuals, regardless of their abilities, can thrive, contribute to their communities, and achieve their full potential. This vision necessitates collaboration, commitment, and a profound understanding of Nunavut's unique context, leading to a more resilient and inclusive society. Implementing these recommendations will help create a more inclusive and supportive employment landscape in Nunavut, ensuring equitable opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate meaningfully and contribute to their communities.



Built Environment

Accessibility Standards Canada is creating standards for the built environment aimed at removing and preventing barriers in outdoor spaces, buildings and building sites

to foster an inclusive environment for everyone, including persons with disabilities.ⁱ Draft standards outline technical requirements covering areas such as exterior and interior paths of travel, building entrances, ramps, elevators, doorways, controls, parking zones, washrooms, signage, illumination, assistive listening systems, and emergency systems. These efforts are crucial in ensuring that infrastructure across Canada meets accessible design principles, promoting equitable access and participation for all individuals.

Conversely, during an Arctic Policy Framework regional roundtable session in Iqaluit in 2017, several critical issues related to the built environment in Nunavut were highlighted. One significant concern raised was the lack of adequate housing, which was identified as a significant barrier to economic growth and mobility for Nunavummiut across the territory.ⁱⁱ Participants noted that the housing shortage not only hinders skills development and higher education but also restricts the number of college students due to limited accommodation and classroom space availability. Moreover, the absence of housing in communities near significant resource projects prevents individuals from other regions from relocating to areas with potential employment opportunities. This leads to importing labour from the south on a fly-in, fly-out basis. To address these challenges, participants emphasized the need for strategic thinking, leveraging resources, and partnering with Inuit development corporations to ensure housing projects promote

i Accessibility Standards Canada. (n.d.). Built environment. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/built-environment#s2.6>

ii Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. (2017). Arctic Policy Framework regional roundtable session: Iqaluit, November 2, 2017. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1527268811981/1537885603105>

apprenticeships, capacity building, and local job creation alongside construction efforts.

Participant discussions also aligned with the report from Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) on Nunavut's Infrastructure Gap,ⁱⁱⁱ which highlights the state of road infrastructure in the territory. The report underscores the widespread deterioration of community roads in Nunavut, which are often more neglected than roads in other parts of Canada. Issues such as poor drainage causing impassable roads in spring and persistent pothole problems contribute to the overall substandard condition of Nunavut's road network (NTI, 2020). Participants in this study noted that these issues continue to impact people with disabilities and Elders. Moreover, the limited presence of formal sidewalks outside a small area in Iqaluit exacerbates challenges for pedestrians and motorists navigating poorly maintained gravel roads (NTI, 2020). The absence of sidewalks and dust exposure from unpaved roads jeopardizes safety and raises health concerns for residents relying on Nunavut's road infrastructure. Both participants in this study and the NTI (2020) report emphasize the critical need to enhance road conditions, increase the proportion of paved roads where feasible, and ensure regular maintenance. These improvements are essential to enhancing transportation efficiency, connectivity, and safety for individuals across Nunavut.

The impact of housing challenges in Nunavut extends beyond local priorities to affect federal spaces and initiatives in several significant ways. While federal agencies may not be directly responsible for local housing issues, these challenges intersect with broader federal policies and programs, influencing their effectiveness and reach in northern regions like Nunavut:

1. Inadequate housing in Nunavut can directly affect federal operations and initiatives that rely on local infrastructure and workforce availability. For instance, federal offices and facilities in Nunavut may struggle to attract and retain staff if suitable housing options are limited. This can hinder the delivery of services and programs, impacting residents who rely on these services for various needs.

iii Nunavut Tunngavik. (2020). Nunavut's Infrastructure Gap. www.tunngavik.com/files/2020/10/2020.10.20-Nunavuts_Infrastructure_Gap_Report_vf.pdf

“ To me accessibility means that you should be able to go wherever anybody else can. That there should be no limit.”

— Study participant

2. Housing shortages contribute to socio-economic disparities that federal policies aim to address. By exacerbating barriers to education, employment, and economic participation, inadequate housing undermines the effectiveness of federal initiatives to foster economic development and social inclusion in northern communities. This, in turn, affects the overall effectiveness and equitable distribution of federal resources and support programs designed to benefit northern residents.
3. The broader socio-economic impacts of housing inadequacies, such as higher healthcare costs and reduced workforce productivity, can indirectly affect federal budget allocations and policy considerations for northern regions.

Persistent housing challenges in places like Nunavut may hinder the federal government's ability to allocate resources effectively and tailor policies to address regional disparities and promote sustainable development.

The unique infrastructure needs of Nunavut, stemming from its vast size and the considerable distances between communities, were also a significant concern raised. The rapid transition from traditional Inuit ways of life to Western modernity in the twentieth century has left a 'generational' challenge in

infrastructure development. The obstacles to increasing housing in Nunavut, such as high construction costs, material imports, and the lack of serviced land, have significant economic implications. These challenges contribute to economic leakage, with a substantial portion of the money spent on housing projects flowing to southern regions. This, in turn, hampers the circulation of money within the local economy. Strategic investments in housing projects are, therefore, not just about addressing immediate housing needs but also about promoting local job creation, apprenticeships, and capacity building. These investments can enhance economic opportunities within the territory and help to maintain economic benefits within Nunavut.

The built environment emerged as a central theme throughout 67% of all conversations (interviews and group discussions).

The roundtable also discussed the need for enhanced infrastructure development, including creating new fiber optic networks to improve internet access^{iv}, further aligning with participant suggestions for all-weather roads, airstrip upgrades, small-craft harbours, and ports to facilitate transportation and support economic activities such as fishing. However, high shipping costs and a limited season for shipping contribute to building challenges. Small populations also mean a limited labour pool for construction projects, and many communities have to bring labour up from southern Canada and cover room and board costs. Extreme climate and weather conditions also create barriers and challenges unique to the North. Housing shortages across all communities also mean many Nunavummiut live in crowded conditions. New housing developments are well underway, but many participants in this study are concerned that accessibility and safety features are not a priority.

The built environment emerged as a central theme throughout 67% of all conversations (interviews and group discussions). Accessibility features within the built environment (including ramps and accessible washrooms) were the most prominent

iv Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. (2017). Arctic Policy Framework regional roundtable session: Iqaluit, November 2, 2017. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1527268811981/1537885603105>

topic of discussion and were the focal point in 52% of all discussions. Concerns about the accessibility of sidewalks, roads, and walkways were second and were discussed in 40% of all group discussions and interviews. Many Nunavummiut acknowledge the lack of infrastructure and its impact on people living with disabilities. Participants often report how communities come together to support each other to compensate for gaps in infrastructure.

“Lack of infrastructure like wheelchair, ramps and the road gravel is hard for disabled people to walk on. There are no programs, but it’s also that people don’t really know what disability is. You never see people say oh, that person has a disability because they are just here in the community, part of everyone. We help each other and make sure that things can be accessible for people, like opening a door for someone in a wheelchair or bringing food to them.”

However, the very real impacts of limited accessibility in the built environment were apparent. Many respondents reported on limited mobility options in their community. They have difficulty accessing public spaces, leaving their homes, or even getting around within their homes. As participants and their families reported, this results in reduced mental health and isolation.

“We just want to make sure that everyone has the ability to go in and out as they please and go where they want as they please.”

— Study participant

Her Built Environment

Eeta shares her home with 8 family members. They take care of each other, but sometimes Eeta wishes for more personal space and privacy.

Eeta and her family are on the waiting list for a new housing development in their community. They requested a unit with a ramp and wide doorways so Eeta can use her wheelchair inside.

They’ve also asked for safety bars in the washroom and a walk-in shower to help keep Eeta’s grandmother safe from slips and falls.

Eeta would like more accessible housing units in her community.



FIGURE 10 Her built environment

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

Accessibility Features for Buildings

Isolation was a prevalent theme when asking Nunavummiut about the built environment. As stated by one respondent, “*if I had a disability, I would look outside and I would think if I didn’t have to, I wouldn’t.*” Many respondents brought forward feelings of isolation, sadness, and feeling trapped in their homes because of a lack of accessibility in their community. Nunavummiut spoke of being unable to access essential services, visit loved ones’ homes and workplaces, or enjoy recreational activities due to the lack of well-maintained and well-designed accessibility features. Some individuals described being encouraged to move south if they could not get around town. In response, one respondent countered:

“How do you relocate to down south to just get the things that you need? If this is your home and you’ve lived here and you have nothing... down south. So, then it means you are just asking people to move out, relocate. So let’s say, for example what if the whole community, one way or the other, has a form of disability then it means the community is relocating. You are asking everybody in the community to move down south. There should be a way of helping people.”

Respondents recommended increasing accessibility features in communities to promote disabled individuals’ participation in community life and access to essential services. This would facilitate families and communities staying together, reduce isolation, and improve well-being.

The lack of ramps and wheelchair-accessible spaces makes for dangerous conditions. As one respondent describes, a family member who had an amputation had to be carried because they were in an inaccessible housing unit.

The research team heard many similar stories of family members physically lifting loved ones in order to use the bathroom or to bathe, lifting people into the back of trucks for transportation to medical appointments in extreme weather conditions, or maneuvering the body of a loved one who had passed away, because entryways were too narrow to bring out the body. Solutions to the built environment, such as accessible

Taking Risks

Respondents report on risks they have to take when the built environment doesn't support safe day-to-day activities:

"Right now, he can't go anywhere. Because of the conditions, the weather conditions if he slips and falls, it would be dangerous for him. He needs help to get outside, and he's afraid to fall."

"But because they live in a two-story house and then when, that's where the washroom is located in upstairs, and there's none in the downstairs. So, that's where she is. She doesn't walk upstairs to use the washroom."

Respondent: *"But she just before, like last years of her life, she, she got both of her legs got amputated. And what happened was these old houses that they live in did not have like, wide door. They only had like very skinny and slim, slim doors."*

Researcher: *"She couldn't get through with the wheelchair."*

Respondent: *"No, she she could not get through. What happened was they had custom made or they could make for her. And these houses, they do not have any wheelchair. You know [...] wheelchair ramps."*

Researcher: *"And you were saying that you and other family, you carried her?"*

Respondent: *"Yeah. We had to carry her from, like, make sure that there was a big blanket and make sure that we were holding on to it. And then we would carry her to either a, a vehicle or to the toilet, to her to her wheelchair or the wheelchair. If she wants to sleep, we would carry her in the wheelchair."*

bathrooms, wider doorways, and larger porch areas, were all recommended by respondents to maintain autonomy and dignity and to reduce isolation.

"We used to have a bathtub and we asked [company name], because I had to lift him up to go in the bathtub. Now we have a shower just, you know, from the floor. That one is, because he now can take a shower all by himself. To go in and out, because the floor is so low."

"He brought it to the [company name] board and saying look, in the community, not only in (community name redacted), there's lots of Elders. Can you install those kind of showers, whatever you call it, because it's, they probably don't like shower or bath, cause you, unless they have a helper."

Participants also requested accessibility features that would ease use, such as lower counter tops and cupboards. This was requested not only for wheelchair accessibility but also for community members who are shorter in stature.

"When they were building our house, they came to our house. They asked about the counters and cupboards. I said, can you make the counters a little low? Good thing I did."

"Yeah the shelves are too high or make them like slightly lower, so a

short person like, like me can be able to reach it without always having to put something there for you to stand on.”

“Washroom would be the most. Because that’s where it doesn’t have any proper handle and shower, shower seating.”

Dangerous Conditions

Lack of snow clearing on ramps, sidewalks, and stairs often prevented people from getting around. Although some buildings are equipped with accessibility features such as ramps and automatic door buttons, it was reported that they are not consistently maintained or installed correctly. Respondents told stories of waiting outside in extreme cold for ramps to be cleared of snow or repaired. Too-high stairs, especially for Elders, were a common theme. Multiple respondents gave examples of preventable injuries as a result of dangerous household features. The issue of jurisdictional responsibility for snow clearing was a recurring concern, underscoring the need for coordinated efforts to ensure reliable accessibility year-round across all public spaces in Nunavut.

“I have a knee proble[m], and I remember going to my aunt’s house, and I fell down 10 stairs, metal stairs, and was bruise[d] on my back and legs because the stairs are metal and very high and when they are outside in winter and snow then it is icy and dangerous.”

“She found it hard to walk. And when she went to the health centre, sometimes the ramps aren’t shoveled.”

Some Elders who cannot shovel their ramps and walkways go on the radio to ask for help from the community. Others report waiting in their houses during winter instead of attempting to go outside in unpredictable conditions.

Some respondents reported seeing people with disabilities, mental illness, and addiction not having anywhere to go due to a general lack of shelters or crisis centres and, therefore, spending

too much time outside in harsh winter weather.

“They’re confused or and they’re wandering around and it’s freezing cold, like we need places where these folks can go that are socially engaging.”

Other concerns about the built environment include mold, lack of ventilation, lack of clean drinking water, issues related to frozen and backed-up plumbing, and, in some cases, reports of buildings with only one exit. All of these issues contribute to poor health and increased risks for Nunavummiut.

“We think there’s mold in our unit right now. And it’s affecting, once, once it goes from, like, a mental to a physical manifesta - manifestation type thing. Where you start to feel, like I can. I can still kind of feel it in my lungs right now. I woke up with, with, like, feeling like, allergies and stuff, so it kind of doubles up.”

“Like the amount of communities without - we had a boil water advisory in because it was a super warm summer. Like, we’re lucky in this community. We have a very reliable, I guess, water source. But it hit plus 22-ish, and they got some bacteria in it. Just like. Just light enough to put whatever. So we had to boil water. And holy smokes. It’s so much [work], just every time that you’re trying to do anything, brush your teeth at night, like it’s wild.”

Many of Nunavummiut’s concerns can be addressed, particularly with new units under construction in the territory. Adding accessibility features would cost little but improve quality of life exponentially.

Resources Needed to Make Homes Accessible

Nunavummiut reported needing more housing, and especially more accessible housing, which has significant implications for federal jobs that come with housing in Nunavut. These accessibility challenges also extend to requests for accessibility in federally regulated buildings located in Nunavut and similar northern regions.

People expressed a desire to live independently but doubted this aspiration could become reality, as highlighted by one respondent: *“There’s a lot of people who could live independently if the supports were in place, but they’re not.”* The high cost of living and lack of accessible houses and apartments were cited as reasons for being unable to live independently.

“They’re confused or and they’re wandering around and it’s freezing cold, like we need places where these folks can go that are socially engaging.”

Respondents described needing the following in their homes: walk-in/out showers, rails, handles, main-level bathrooms, ramps, ventilation, air conditioning, adjustable beds, lower cabinets and counter tops and accessible dishwashers and vacuums. Wider doors were recommended as some respondents could not fit their wheelchairs and walkers inside without enough room to get around. Those who required renovations on their homes used both self-advocacy and resourcefulness as tools to improve the safety and accessibility of their homes. Respondents spoke of going to the housing board to advocate for railings, ramps and other accessibility features; however, they were often unsuccessful in their requests. Those who owned their home reported on the high cost and inaccessibility of materials to complete renovations. One respondent told the story of her grandson finding wood in the local dump to make railings for her and her husband.

“And the rail, because they have their own house, the rail was made by one of her grandchildren, because the love for their grandfather was there. And he [got that] woo[d] ... [from the] dump, over there, and then therefore made the rail.”

Many respondents reported that these features are needed because Nunavummiut want to maintain their autonomy. This is an essential part of Inuit culture and contributes to feelings of dignity and belonging.

“That happened with my grandfather too when he had cancer. He knew how his body was failing and he did everything he could to walk around the house and do stuff. Put popcorn in the microwave for the kids. Ask for help, but he wants to do it himself.”

“And they have to ask for help all the time. So many times a week we go and the stairs are just - It’s just a bit much for older people that’s all. The stairs are like far between them, the access is not good and stuff and it’s hard for them. They have to keep asking for people to help them.”

“I go around about on my own, but this disabled lacks makes you not do whatever you have to do. It makes you wait for something that’s going to happen or something.”

Maintaining independence and autonomy was a theme across all interviews and group discussions. Nunavummiut have great appreciation and pride for how they care for each other and work communally. However, being able to contribute to the family unit and being capable are also highly valued and important parts of Inuit identity.

Public Spaces

People with disabilities experience difficulty getting into buildings to access necessary supplies and services. Public buildings without ramps include churches, schools, stores, workplaces, government buildings, shelters, airports, and medical centres. When buildings had ramps, they often needed to be cleared of snow for individuals to use them. Participants expressed frustration that accessibility features were not maintained.

“Like, I can’t tell you how many buildings I’ve been in where, you know, you go and the, like, the ramp, which is not just for people in wheelchairs, but it’s also for, you know, like the elderly. Who can’t necessarily do stairs or like, you know, anyone, really. And the ramp isn’t shoveled. Or the, the, the accessibility button doesn’t actually open - the door. You know, so it’s like it’s, these things are great to see. But then if they’re

not actually being maintained, then they're essentially pointless, right?"

Lack of accessible parking was identified as a barrier. Once inside the building, more barriers await. Handrails on both sides of staircases and elevators in multi-story buildings are needed. Accessible washrooms with handrails, change tables, and wide doors were also suggested. Doors need to be unlocked, wider, lighter, and have accessibility buttons to allow people to move in and out easily.

Additionally, respondents reported being sent to organizations that were not wheelchair accessible. Participants were also often unaware of the location of accessible entrances in public spaces. Participants described how the lack of accessibility features in the community limits people's choices, as demonstrated in this exchange between a respondent and a member of the research team:

Respondent: *"And I primarily have decided to not use a wheelchair for all time, even though it would benefit me because, I, my house is not accessible and my community is not accessible. So I don't want to waste the money on buying one when I might never use it."*

Researcher: *"Right. If you had accessible housing and if the community had things like a sidewalk was paved, would you be more likely to use a wheelchair?"*

Respondent: *"Definitely. Especially now that I have part time jobs and I'm earning money, where I could afford to invest in one. That, that definitely is the only thing really separating me from taking that step."*

Nunavummiut want to see public buildings made fully accessible, including allocation for maintenance and snow removal. This would facilitate more options for moving about their communities on their terms.

Walkways and Roads

Well-maintained roads and walkways are essential for getting

around communities. As discussed previously, many participants shared their concerns that community members, particularly Elders, stay inside because roads are unsafe for walking. In the words of one respondent, *“the snow removal just does not do it... They’re stuck in their houses all winter long.”* Some respondents mentioned borrowing vehicles or snowmobiles when walking on the roads became too treacherous. Respondents recommended pavement as a solution to potholes and rough patches of road. However, conversations with municipal staff indicated that the high costs of paving and maintaining paved roads were unaffordable for most remote communities.

Participants expressed frustration with the lack of accessibility in their communities. Failure to address infrastructure issues leads many to feel ignored or dismissed.

“For example, if you come to me and you are asking me what I need and I tell you, okay, I need a wheelchair because I can’t move. It makes me mobile with that wheelchair, electronic wheelchair, without the support or the push of anybody, I can go do, and get to wherever I want to go to. And you tell me it’s expensive, then it means you’re not willing to help me then. Because it’s expensive and you still are not able to get it for me, I am still in the same situation that I have always been in. So there has been no help. And if you give me the excuse that the roads are bad and it wouldn’t last, for that wheelchair to be destroyed, then what then do we do concerning the road. Because I feel we are all human beings and we need equal, we have equal rights. We see other people in the bigger cities who have all these things at their disposal.”

Narrow roads, lack of sidewalks and walkways, and roads busy with four-wheelers, snowmobiles, and other vehicles are barriers to getting around, especially for users of mobility aids. As stated by one respondent, *“the roads are not designed or set up for people in wheelchairs.”* Difficulty using roads year round was discussed. In the summer, roads were reported to be overly dusty and rocky. In winter, lack of snow clearing, darkness, and slippery conditions can be dangerous. Speeding (of vehicles including four-wheelers and snowmobiles) was also a safety concern for pedestrians, *“Sidewalks and maybe even traffic light to help*

people go slower.”

Participants expressed concern that without public transportation many community members had to walk. Respondents noted that walking in extreme temperatures on dark roads without sidewalks is a safety concern. A few respondents also cited the dangers of walking when wild animals might be in the community. Recommendations from participants included more benches and weather shelters beside roads and walkways, the installation of crosswalks and traffic lights, and regular snow-clearing, sanding, and salting.

Outdoor Recreation

Many respondents spoke about wanting more access to outdoor recreation and time on the land. Physical and mental wellness and connection to cultural knowledge were cited as reasons why Nunavummiut wanted more time on the land and well-being as a result of connection to the land was brought up often.

“Us disability people must go out on the land to calm our mind and heart and we are tired of being in the house like we are in prison.”

However, barriers to getting out on the land included a lack of transportation, inadequate outdoor clothing, and high fuel costs. This situation is exacerbated for people with disabilities, who experience additional challenges due to the lack of an accessible built environment. The absence of proper infrastructure and accommodations makes it even more difficult for them to navigate these barriers and participate in traditional land-based activities.

“It would be nice if I could do that. Which I cannot do because I don't have no machine or skidoo, boat or whatever you need to go hunting. And it's kinda hard to ask people to take you hunting.”

Current land-based programs were commended, but respondents desired an expanded scope, including programming in the winter, programming for individuals under eighteen, and programming for women. Many respondents wanted outdoor recreation to connect Elders and young people.

However, physical disabilities were a barrier to recreation, and respondents wanted accommodations to be provided. Increasing access to outdoor recreation through community workshops and on land-based skills was suggested, with the idea that these could *“at least give them the tools to go on the land.”*

In addition to land-based activities, respondents wanted more opportunities to participate in inclusive outdoor recreation, such as accessible skating rinks, basketball courts, and playgrounds. Existing playgrounds could be made accessible by adding paved paths, handrails, and ramps. Outdoor spaces in some hamlets require maintenance, as a lack of updated infrastructure has led to sewage leaks, garbage, and stray dogs in parks and playgrounds.

“Us disability people must go out on the land to calm our mind and heart and we are tired of being in the house like we are in prison.”

Emergency Exits and Safety Features

Interviews and group discussions with Nunavummiut indicate that many live in high-risk situations due to inadequate emergency features. Respondents listed hazardous ramps, steep staircases, narrow doorways and bathrooms without accessible features. Many respondents reported that they find it difficult to exit their homes in the case of an emergency, with added risks for individuals in wheelchairs. Worries about not being home to carry loved ones out of emergencies were also cited. In one harrowing example, a respondent with mobility barriers was home alone with small children when their house caught on fire. It was only with a neighbour’s help that they could get out of the home.

The lack of housing options contributes to Nunavummiut living in homes without emergency features. In the words of one participant, *“The first place we were moved to had one door...we kept on saying, what if the house started burning?”*

Fire alarms with flashing lights and vibration pads, instead of sounds, were suggested for people who are hard of hearing.

“I saw these vibrating pads that help tell people when there’s a fire. It’s about making sure nobody feels left out and everyone feels welcome, you know? I wish there was something that we can have that tells us what we can do to have better accessibility, like the pad thing.”

With the high rates of hearing loss in the North^v, it is critical to ensure that safety features accommodate the deaf and hard of hearing.

Acoustics

Many respondents reported difficulty hearing in public spaces such as workplaces, churches, and community halls. Background noise and others speaking quietly were identified as barriers to understanding conversations and participating in community events. Several respondents reported purchasing sound amplifying devices to aid them in attending public forums. A few participants utilized hearing aids, although accessing audiologists and appropriately fitted assistive devices was challenging for many.

“Uh that’s, I lost two hearing aids, I don’t know how... Yeah, I used to have one, but it’s not so bad... But sometimes when I get to a public meeting or church or something. I bought myself a store bought, just a gimmick like that... And it helps.”

One respondent described travelling outside of his community to be fitted for a hearing aid. When the hearing aid was shipped to his home community, the piece was for the wrong ear. Not wanting to deal with the trouble of having it replaced, he opted to continue without a hearing aid.

Sensory-conscious environments are needed to accommodate Nunavummiut at work and leisure. One respondent who is hard of hearing described regular staff meetings at their workplace that occur in a noisy machine room. They cited that

v Fitzpatrick, E. M., McCurdy, L., Whittingham, J., Rourke, R., Nassrallah, F., Grandpierre, V., Momoli, F., & Bijelic, V. (2020). Hearing loss prevalence and hearing health among school-aged children in the Canadian Arctic. *International Journal of Audiology*, 60(7), 521–531. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14992027.2020.1731616>

they often had difficulty hearing the necessary information being communicated but were shy to indicate that they could not hear. Increased awareness of workplace environments and accessibility on behalf of employers is needed.

Signage and Wayfinding

Many Nunavummiut shared concerns about navigating and wayfinding in their home community and visiting other communities for medical appointments or leisure. Stop signs, lighting on pathways, and traffic lights were recommended.

Respondents spoke of wanting bright signage, which uses large lettering and includes Inuktitut and braille. Incorrectly translated signs were an extra barrier for Inuktitut speakers. Additionally, bright colours on stair railings were suggested. Another recommendation was clear pathways in community spaces for visually impaired individuals and those who use mobility aids. The lack of accessible parking signs was also discussed. Braille and audio announcements for those who are visually impaired were recommended. Respondents suggested signs for accessible entrances, ramps, and washrooms.

“We need better signs because we don’t even have signs on the roads or on buildings. Even I find it really hard. That would make such a huge difference for some people.”

One respondent wanted signs to indicate where one can access disability services. This could be put in place in all communities in Nunavut and in communities in the south where Nunavummiut visit for medical services.

IQ Values and the Built Environment

The issues surrounding the built environment in Nunavut are intricately linked to the foundational principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit which emphasize community, respect, and harmony with the environment. These values provide a guiding framework for addressing the significant accessibility and infrastructure challenges experienced by Nunavummiut.

Central to Inuit societal values is Piliqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq,

the principle of working together for a common cause. This collaborative spirit inherent in Inuit culture can be leveraged to tackle systemic issues in the built environment. By involving local residents, government agencies, and Inuit corporations in community-driven solutions, there is an opportunity to foster ownership and collective responsibility. This approach can lead to more sustainable and culturally relevant infrastructure projects tailored to the unique needs of Nunavut communities. Similarly, Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq emphasizes respect and care for the land, animals, and environment, which can guide the development of the built environment in a way that harmonizes with natural surroundings. Incorporating environmentally sustainable practices in construction, such as using local materials and energy-efficient designs, not only mitigates economic and environmental costs but also ensures outdoor spaces and pathways are accessible and safe for all community members, including those with disabilities.

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq, focusing on respecting others and caring for people, is critical in addressing the built environment's impact on individuals with disabilities. Ensuring that public and private spaces are accessible demonstrates a commitment to respecting the dignity and autonomy of all community members. Features like ramps, wider doorways, and accessible washrooms facilitate independent living and reduce isolation, promoting inclusive environments that honour the well-being and participation of every individual. Further, Pijitsirniq's value of serving and providing for family and community underscores the need for accessible and adequate housing. Housing projects incorporating accessibility features not only meet the immediate needs of individuals with disabilities but also support broader community well-being. By integrating accessible design principles, communities can enable their members to contribute fully to family and community life, reflecting the communal nature of Inuit culture, where mutual care is integral.

These values are exemplified in everyday practices where Nunavummiut support each other in navigating challenges posed by the built environment. Whether assisting with household tasks or clearing snow, these acts reflect a community ethos of mutual aid and care. However, despite community efforts, instances persist where individuals require additional support due to inadequate accessibility features, highlighting ongoing needs for improvements in infrastructure

to enhance inclusivity and well-being.

These values exemplify how Nunavummiut have adapted to service gaps by helping their loved ones and fellow community members navigate issues with the built environment. Disabled individuals told stories of others holding doors for them and going shopping on their behalf. Nunavummiut mentioned calling loved ones when they had fallen in their homes or needed help reaching into high cupboards. Friends and family come over to shovel snow when needed. Young people asking for money in return for snow-clearing services may be seen as culturally incongruent for some, as being in service of others is of high value in Inuit communities.

“I know it goes back [not to] quote here it’s IQ, Inuit IQ, but also yet again, just the basic human values. We just want to make sure that everyone has the ability to go in and out as they please and go where they want as they please.”

Despite communities doing their best to support disabled members, there were many instances where individuals needed to call on others for help due to hardships in situations that could be avoided with increased accessibility features.

“We just want to make sure that everyone has the ability to go in and out as they please and go where they want as they please.”

Recommendations

To effectively address accessibility barriers and enhance the built environment in Nunavut, governments must adopt a multifaceted approach that aligns with Inuit Societal Values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles. The following recommendations outline some measures governments can take to support inclusive and sustainable infrastructure development in Nunavut.

1. **Enhance Community Engagement and Consultation:** Implement structured and ongoing community engagement processes that prioritize the needs of

Nunavummiut, particularly those with disabilities, in all stages of infrastructure planning and development. This includes:

- a. Establishing local advisory committees involving community members, Elders, persons with disabilities, and other stakeholders to provide input and guidance.
 - b. Conducting regular community meetings and forums to discuss proposed projects, gather feedback, and ensure community buy-in.
 - c. Utilizing culturally appropriate methods of communication and decision-making to reflect local values and preferences.
- 2. Prioritize Accessible and Inclusive Design:** To ensure all infrastructure projects meet universal design principles and accessibility standards:
 - a. Mandate that all new public infrastructure projects and renovations adhere to universal design principles, ensuring full accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
 - b. Develop stringent accessibility standards for all federally-funded infrastructure projects and provide training for local contractors and developers on inclusive design practices.
 - c. Monitor and evaluate projects for compliance with accessibility standards, involving community members in the assessment process to ensure effectiveness and cultural appropriateness.
- 3. Invest in Sustainable and Culturally Appropriate Housing:** Address housing accessibility and sustainability through targeted initiatives:
 - a. Allocate dedicated funding for accessible, energy-efficient housing within federal housing programs.
 - b. Partner with Inuit organizations and local governments to integrate traditional knowledge and sustainable building practices into housing projects, aligning with values like Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq.
 - c. Support the retrofitting of existing homes to improve accessibility and energy efficiency, ensuring all housing meets modern standards while respecting cultural values and environmental considerations.

4. **Foster Capacity Building and Local Workforce Development:** Promote local workforce development and capacity building to support sustainable infrastructure growth:
 - a. Fund training programs in construction, project management, and sustainable building practices for local residents.
 - b. Collaborate with Inuit organizations to establish apprenticeship and mentorship programs that blend traditional skills with modern techniques.
 - c. Encourage the inclusion of traditional knowledge in training programs, enhancing local expertise and fostering community involvement in infrastructure projects.

5. **Strengthen Intergovernmental Collaboration:** Improve coordination between federal, territorial, and local governments to maximize resources and streamline infrastructure development efforts:
 - a. Establish intergovernmental working groups focused on accessibility and infrastructure issues, ensuring representation from Inuit organizations and community leaders.
 - b. Develop integrated planning frameworks that align federal initiatives with territorial and community priorities, fostering cohesive and sustainable development.
 - c. Facilitate information sharing and joint funding opportunities to support comprehensive infrastructure projects that meet the diverse needs of Nunavummiut.

By adopting these recommendations, governments can play a pivotal role in transforming the built environment in Nunavut, ensuring it is inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of Inuit Societal Values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles. This approach will not only address the immediate needs of individuals with disabilities but also contribute to the long-term resilience and well-being of Nunavummiut.



Communication

Accessibility Standards Canada's current standard on communication (other than information and communication technologies) focuses on plain language to enhance communication by adhering to

nine categories of requirements.ⁱ It emphasizes writing content that meets the diverse needs of audiences, ensuring information is relevant, easy to locate, and well-organized. Clarity is vital, simplifying language and complex concepts to make information accessible to all. The standard promotes inclusivity by enhancing accessibility for individuals with disabilities through clear language and accessible document design, guidelines for language use, including tone and structure, and visual elements and document structure to enhance comprehension.

While the standard emphasizes plain language and inclusive design, several barriers impede its effective implementation in Nunavut. First, linguistic diversity poses a fundamental challenge; with Inuktitut being the predominant language, translating complex federal communications while maintaining clarity and relevance can be challenging. Also, limited digital infrastructure and internet connectivity across remote communities can hinder access to online resources designed under these standards. The vast geographical expanse exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult to ensure consistent dissemination and reception of accessible information. Additionally, socio-economic disparities and varying levels of digital literacy among residents further complicate efforts to meet accessibility standards. Addressing these barriers requires nuanced approaches that consider local languages, technological infrastructure, and community-specific needs to effectively enhance communication accessibility in Nunavut.

i Accessibility Standards Canada (n.d.). Communication (other than information and communication technologies). <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/communication-other-information-and-communication-technologies>

Further, visuals often fail to accurately depict or resonate with Inuit culture, lifestyle, and landscapes. This disconnect not only diminishes the accessibility of information but also contributes to a sense of alienation. Images that do not reflect local realities can perpetuate stereotypes or simply fail to convey the nuanced contexts of life in Nunavut. Moreover, the lack of culturally appropriate visuals can hinder comprehension and engagement. Addressing this issue requires a deliberate effort to incorporate authentic visual representations that reflect the diversity and richness of Inuit culture and the unique environment of Nunavut. By doing so, communications can better resonate with and serve the needs of Nunavummiut.

Clear and accessible communication was discussed as being critical for community members to access much-needed services and support. However, bureaucratic barriers between service providers and community members can result in Nunavummiut not accessing services and benefits they require. Communication came up in 24% of conversations. Improvements to communication are desired by many respondents, with increased communication in Inuktitut and universal use of plain and accessible language, both being discussed in 14% of all discussions.

For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, significant communication barriers emerged as health-related and emergency updates were often not provided in multiple languages, including American and Inuit sign language. This omission created challenges, especially for those whose primary language was not adequately

Communicating in English

Eeta interprets in Inuktitut when her grandmother has medical appointments. She helps her grandmother understand the medical words and important information – it's not always easy, but she does her best.

Eeta also helps her grandmother find online information about her benefits, taxes, or banking. It can be hard to navigate websites and find the right information.

Sometimes they get frustrated, especially if the internet connection is bad. They turn off the computer and decide to try again another day.

“[A] lot of people cannot talk to them because ... they don't speak Inuktitut.”

— Study participant

FIGURE 11 Communicating in English

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

supported. Many individuals had difficulties accessing critical information about health protocols, vaccination campaigns, and emergency measures, leading to confusion, misinformation, and heightened risks.

Communication came up in 24% of conversations. Improvements to communication are desired by many respondents, with increased communication in Inuktitut and universal use of plain and accessible language.

Clear Communication from Services Providers

Respondents report difficulties knowing how and where to access help, including who to contact within their community for information and support. Respondents expressed frustration around the lack of transparency on which services will be available, and when. Failure to provide community members with notice of upcoming visits by service providers limited the abilities of those with disabilities to arrange transportation, childcare, interpretation services or other needed accommodations. For instance, several respondents reported not being notified when a healthcare specialist was in town and available for appointments.

“Okay, so it’s hard enough to go, to convince yourself to go to the dentist, but then is the dentist even in town? There’s no [...] notification system for the community”

Many respondents reported on health care services, noting that they receive poor communication from providers when they request clarification or further information. Communication around medical travel, or routine check-ups can be inconsistent. Failure to use plain language when communicating was also interpreted by participants as a lack of empathy from service providers, which is something that a number of respondents indicated. For respondents who have to travel for medical reasons, many expressed that communication about their travel and medical procedures was not adequately communicated to them. These trips are stressful for a number of reasons (sterile environment, unfamiliar place, may be in pain, etc), and the

“ To remove barriers, we have to work together.
We can build ramps and elevators in buildings.
We can make sure information is in many
languages people speak. ”

— Survey participant

addition of overwhelming and confusing language from service providers and government representatives around and during medical travel exacerbates this stress.

Respondents highlighted the difficulty of learning how to communicate when discussing complex medical issues, and the challenges of then interpreting that information to family and friends.

“A lot of us are like, English, or have English as a second language. And, when you have a child with a disability, all the terminology that you’re learning is another language... And a lot of times you have to translate that into Inuktitut. To your school, to your community, to your family, friends. Sometimes you don’t know how to say it in English.”

One respondent explained that medical jargon and language around care cannot be fully interpreted into Inuktitut because there is often no direct translation. Unfortunately, communicating in a language that one is not comfortable with impedes the ability of many Nunavummiut to advocate for themselves.

Some participants, especially Elders and those not fluent in English, reported negative experiences with medical procedures.

Participants described procedures happening without fully informed consent. Participants described going along with instructions provided at appointments but not receiving clear or complete explanations as to why they are being instructed in a certain way. This was especially apparent with surgeries and medical procedures. Individuals may have questions or concerns that they would like addressed, but medical visits can be overwhelming, and factors such as language barriers and uncertainty about where to direct questions hinder communication. One respondent reported having surgery but not knowing why. He stated that he went along with what was being recommended to him. At the time of the interview, he was still unsure of the reasoning for the surgery.

“And, when you have a child with a disability, all the terminology that you’re learning is another language... And a lot of times you have to translate that into Inuktitut.”

With respect to Elders who are receiving home care in their communities, it was expressed that patients need to fully understand the medications that they are receiving and why. This needs to be communicated clearly, in plain language, and in Inuktitut - to the best possible translation wherever possible.

“Also, sometimes, it’s hard to find information in Inuktitut or other languages people speak. This can make it tough for disabled Nunavummiut to get help or understand things.”

“To make programs work well, we need to know what our community needs and how our culture is in as well, have people who speak our language and know the ways we running the programs, use materials we can easily use and understand, like translating them into our language and making them fit our culture, and get everyone in the community involved and supporting the programs because they work best when we all work together.”

“And we need Inuktitut in our areas for our Elders to talk and understand.”

Respondents have implied and explicitly stated that the lack of clear and plain language communication from service providers and government personnel is a factor that increases stress and negatively impacts the day-to-day life of people with disabilities and their families. One respondent hypothesized that the experience of receiving medical treatment in English (or French) may bear resemblance for some Elders to the experience of residential school, particularly when they travel down south for treatment.

Communication Barriers and Accessing Services

Participants expressed frustration with bureaucratic processes and systems that do not facilitate equal and easy access to information and services. Accessing services often requires lengthy processes, including paperwork, forms, phone calls, etc. This can be a burden on those who are already stretched thin, including Nunavummiut caring for a family member(s) with a disability. Navigating these systems is difficult and can discourage Nunavummiut from accessing support. Technical obstacles, confusing instructions, answers that are not helpful, or no answers at all, contribute to frustration and apathy.

“I think there’s a lot of sometimes unnecessary steps. That need to be take - that are taken - or have to be taken, in our system... It’s like “figure it out”. “Pick yourselves up by your bootstraps”.

When communicating with respondents about the challenges people reported in applying for benefits and/or services, one participant spoke about the perseverance that was needed to push through bureaucratic red tape.

“Is the determination. You can’t you cannot stop from where you started. You gotta finish it. Right. I try to tell the younger generation like that. You start, don’t finish, Don’t just stop. You, you finish it. That’s the way you, you have your life going, going forward. That’s what I say to younger generation.”

A number of people expressed that they are aware that there

may be services or opportunities available to them, such as disability benefits or funding, but the process to obtain these services is not clear or has been poorly communicated. Many also mentioned that navigating websites or making phone calls can be challenging, often leaving them with numerous unanswered questions or causing them to give up. As a result, many people reported feeling overwhelmed and discouraged from seeking these services, as noted in this exchange between a participant a member of the research team:

Respondent: *“And I’ve tried getting her to call the [redacted] because they give out some money to help the children who are in school for up to \$2,000. But she doesn’t know how to apply to those.”*

Researcher: *“Okay. Do you think there are any services or programs that the community would benefit from or that she would benefit from?”*

Respondent: *“Uh, she, I’m not sure if she knows if there’s any, what did you call that?”*

Researcher: *“Like mental health services?”*

Respondent: *“Yes, but I’m not sure if she knows if there’s any of those in the community. And plus, even if she tried getting that, I’m not sure if she knows the location or the number, who to go to. But she would be open to talk about any of her problems and who, and what went on.”*

Plain language is critical to ensure that everyone has equal access to information and can act on that information according to their desires. For example, plain language should be used in job advertisements. One respondent said that they see job postings but have difficulty understanding what the job is for because the language used in the advertisement is too elaborate and unclear. This is a deterrent to pursuing job opportunities and is an example of public information that could easily be simplified for clarity and accessibility.

“Most people don’t know how to apply so they never apply.”

Participants also shared that there is a disconnect between organizations and intended beneficiaries. It was noted that organizations are failing to understand how best to serve their target audience and may underestimate the real need based on an apparent lack of demand. As a result, Nunavummiut cannot always access the services and support they need, and programs and services that are badly needed may not be accessible to those who would most benefit from them.

“There’s also a lot of funding available. But, a lot of things that the Inuit people have to be taught how to follow, ugh [...] The translation is sometimes hard to understand if you’ve never been educated.”

“Most people don’t know how to apply so they never apply.”

“I can apply for funding if I need help but I don’t know where. I can look for a funding from other community if I really need help, I think.”

“But maybe, make more posters about opportunities. For funding opportunities. Make more posters and post on social media, make sure everyone has access to those applications.”

Another barrier cited by participants is that application processes have been automated or moved entirely online. This is a major barrier for many Nunavummiut who do not have regular access to computers or reliable internet or who are not comfortable navigating technology.

“So it’s like if you don’t have, you know, a computer, you don’t have a phone, you don’t have, you know, the ability to reach out like. It’s like cool, yeah, we have places like the library where you can go and get access to the internet, but that’s also not like something that, you know, you can’t expect somebody to, like, walk or get themselves to the library every day when they need to book appointments or do anything. Right?”

Several communities also reported not having public spaces, such as libraries, where people could access a computer. One

The Importance of Radio in Nunavut

Participants report on the value that local radio brings to their communities:

“Uh, up here uh there’s a whole lot of Inuit who doesn’t read all the time. Uh, by giving out newsletters and this and that used to be an answer. And, uh, websites nowadays. Nowadays. What is the most, the most promoted thing to get your stuff out right now but within the community if you wanna get information out to the community, the best way to do is to local radio and promote it in a couple of weeks or something like that and let everybody know there’s going to be a radio program about this issue. That is the best way because people want to hear, uh, what, what, what’s available out there.”

“Local radio is very much used up here. So getting the word out through local radio and now all the young people are on social media, they can use social media to, uhm promote accessibility will be good to.”

“So yeah, it’s still the local radio is still used quite a bit, um, for announcements and whatnot. Somebody getting married, or birthdays or this and that or if there’s caribou close by, whatnot it’s still, it’s still used quite a bit because all the other platforms are meaningless and, and you kind of have to be tech savvy to download the syllabic font and whatnot or takes to the syllabic fonts and not, not all elders are, they don’t really read quickly like even the syllabic word, it’s not ours it’s not it didn’t come from us. It was introduced to us in the 1860s by a priest so that we can learn to read the Bible. So even reading and writing is not really part of our history in anyway it’s all mostly oral”.

respondent reported that they are forced to go to the Hamlet office for help filling out paperwork. However, this means that municipal personnel have access to the individual’s personal information and records, which is a privacy concern for them.

It should also be noted that a few respondents highlighted the need for more sign language accommodation. Participants noted that this would improve communication for people with disabilities, as they would be able to access services and participate in various activities more independently. This could lead to better job performance, career advancement, and increased employment opportunities, contributing to financial stability and personal fulfillment.

“But I would like, would love to see a lot of sign, sign language instructor. Not just here, in different - there’s also different people, in different community, needs sign language interpreting. Especially at the hospitals.”

The challenges highlighted by participants underscore a pressing need for reform in how services are communicated and accessed in Nunavut. The frustration expressed over convoluted procedures, inadequate information dissemination, and technological barriers reflects a systemic issue that discourages individuals from accessing essential support. To address these disparities, it is imperative to streamline processes, improve plain language communication

across all sectors, and enhance accessibility through culturally appropriate methods.

Media and Community Communication

Participants stressed that the radio remains one of the primary ways information is conveyed within the community. This is helpful for people with low literacy levels or who primarily speak Inuktitut. When information about services is posted on websites or printed, this excludes populations who rely on Inuktitut radio for their information. In these cases, radio could be better utilized to circulate information originating from outside of the community. This would necessitate stronger and more streamlined communication between external organizations, agencies, and the local community, which was also a recommendation of many respondents.

As many participants stated, it is imperative that wherever possible and within reason, all forms of written and spoken communication are available in Inuktitut. The Inuit Language Protection Act and the Official Languages Act, were created to ensure the promotion and protection of Inuktitut in the territory.ⁱⁱ Many participants expressed frustration that Inuktitut was still not being used across all sectors including schools, workplaces, and public services.

“We need information in our languages, so we know what’s happening, we need support and understanding from others in the community. When they help and include us, it’s easier for us to join in. It makes a big difference.”

The issue of many services being exclusively available in English is intricately tied to a broader and complex problem of language decline among Inuit communities in the North. Over decades, Inuit have consistently expressed concerns about language loss, highlighting its role in social and economic instability and the evolving cultural milieu. This lack of services in Inuktitut fails to support language preservation and undermines respect for Inuit language and culture.

ii Lepage, J.-F., & Langlois, S. (2019). Retrieved June 11, 2024, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2019010-eng.htm>.

Elders have expressed sentiments about the importance of understanding the language, noting how it has personally benefited them and expressing a desire for younger generations to have similar experiences. For instance, one respondent shared that listening to their Elders' stories in Inuktitut on the radio was a source of strength during tough times. They mentioned that younger people miss out on this valuable experience if they cannot understand Inuktitut.

IQ Values and Communication

Accessibility Standards Canada's current standard of communication emphasizes the use of plain language and inclusive design to enhance accessibility across diverse audiences, aligning with IQ values such as Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (respect) by prioritizing clear, relevant, and well-organized information that respects the diverse needs of users. This approach fosters inclusivity by ensuring that information is accessible to all community members, regardless of their abilities. However, several gaps hinder the full embodiment of IQ values within these standards. Linguistic diversity poses a significant challenge, with Inuktitut being predominant in Nunavut, necessitating clear and culturally appropriate translations of federal communications to ensure relevance and accessibility. Further, limitations in digital infrastructure and internet connectivity across remote communities exacerbate these challenges, hindering access to online resources designed under these standards and impacting the effective dissemination of accessible communication across the vast geographical expanse of Nunavut.

In addition to linguistic and technological barriers, integrating cultural values such as Aajiiqatigiinni (decision-making through consensus) and Piliriqatigiinni (collaboration) remains essential. These values advocate for community involvement and culturally appropriate solutions, which are crucial for addressing local language, technology, and socio-economic disparities. The absence of culturally resonant visuals and imagery in many communications further highlights a disconnect with Inuit societal values, potentially reinforcing stereotypes or alienating community members. Testimonies from Nunavummiut underscore significant communication

barriers, including bureaucratic complexities, inadequate plain language communication, and limited transparency, contributing to frustration and inequitable access to services.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach integrating local languages, community-driven strategies, and culturally relevant communication methods. By aligning federal communications more closely with IQ principles, particularly in respecting diversity, shared responsibility, and collaborative decision-making, Nunavut can enhance accessibility to vital information and services. This approach supports community well-being and empowerment and strengthens resilience by ensuring that all Nunavummiut have equitable access to essential resources.

Recommendations

Effective communication is foundational to equitable access to services, information, and opportunities, yet in Nunavut, significant barriers persist that hinder accessibility for many residents, particularly those in remote communities and those with disabilities. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach integrating linguistic diversity, cultural sensitivity, and technological infrastructure. This section outlines strategic recommendations to enhance communication accessibility in Nunavut, focusing on improving language inclusivity, simplifying bureaucratic processes, enhancing service provider communication, and utilizing diverse communication mediums. These initiatives aim not only to meet federal accessibility standards but also to resonate with and empower the diverse communities of Nunavut, ensuring that all residents can access and comprehend vital information effectively.

1. **Language Accessibility and Plain Language Use:**
Establish a comprehensive translation framework for all communications into clear and relevant Inuktut (including Inuit Sign Language), alongside English and French, ensuring cultural relevance and clarity, and implement mandatory plain language guidelines for all service providers across sectors. This ensures information is accessible to all residents, addressing literacy and language barriers effectively.

2. **Improving Service Provider Communication:** Develop a robust notification system to alert community members when service providers are scheduled to visit. This aids in planning and accessing necessary accommodations like interpreters. Also, allocate resources to fund Inuktitut and sign language interpreters on-call for all services. This supports effective communication between providers and service users, ensuring clarity and informed decision-making.
3. **Streamlining Bureaucratic Processes:** Reform bureaucratic procedures for applying to services and benefits to minimize paperwork and streamline processes. This reduces barriers and encourages more individuals to seek necessary support without unnecessary delays or confusion.
4. **Multi-Medium Information Dissemination:** Implement a multi-medium approach to disseminate information, utilizing online platforms, printed materials, and local radio stations. This ensures information reaches all residents, including those with limited internet access or literacy levels.
5. **Cultural Integration and Respect for IQ Values:** Ensure communications and visuals reflect the diversity and richness of Inuit culture and lifestyles. This includes authentic depictions that resonate with local realities and avoid stereotypes, enhancing engagement and relevance.
6. **Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish effective feedback mechanisms to gather community insights on communication effectiveness. Incorporate community input into improving service delivery and accessibility initiatives, fostering trust and inclusivity.
7. **Infrastructure and Technological Support:** Invest in digital literacy programs to enhance residents' ability to access online resources and navigate digital communications effectively. This addresses challenges related to limited internet connectivity and technological barriers in remote communities.

By implementing these recommendations, governments can significantly improve communication accessibility in Nunavut. These actions aim to bridge linguistic, cultural, and technological gaps, ensuring that communications are not only accessible but also meaningful and effective for Nunavummiut.

Procurement

Accessibility Standard Canada's standard on procurement of goods, services, and facilities focuses on addressing barriers that people with disabilities may encounter in

the procurement process.ⁱ These barriers can hinder their full participation as employees or clients. Key areas of concern include:

- The accessibility of goods and services being purchased or leased, the need for flexibility throughout the procurement process
- Ensuring that bidding and evaluation criteria are accessible
- Making procurement-related communications and documents accessible.

The Government of Nunavut Procurement Activity Report for the Fiscal Year 2020/21ⁱⁱ illuminates the intricate complexities embedded within procurement processes in Nunavut. The report acknowledges the subjectivity inherent in decision-making criteria for awarding contracts, which can be open to interpretation and require a nuanced assessment of factors like the availability of qualified vendors or consultants which aligns with our research findings. Moreover, the diverse responsibilities of different government departments introduce unique challenges, with emergency situations and environmental projects in sensitive areas often necessitating swift contracting decisions that limit alternatives and supply options (GN, 2021). External factors, such as Nunavut's short construction season and limited access to resources, further complicate

i Accessibility Standards Canada (n.d). Procurement of goods, services and facilities. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/procurement-goods-services-and-facilities#s4.1>

ii Government of Nunavut (2021). Procurement activity report for the 2020/21 fiscal year. https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2024-02/PAR%202020_2021_English.pdf

project delivery. Compliance with government regulations and policies, including bid adjustment limits and the Nunavummi Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti (NNI) Policy and Regulationsⁱⁱⁱ, adds another layer of complexity to procurement processes, demanding a thorough understanding of legal frameworks.

Procurement was a more obscured topic of discussion, only coming up in 17% of discussions. However, in discussions where it was explored, respondents expressed deep concern about the lack of transparency of government spending, a desire to see more engagement and consultation with Nunavummiut with disabilities, and more advocacy on behalf of Elders.

Inequality in Procurement

Some participants mentioned that the procurement process appears one-sided. They feel that certain groups, particularly those who are educated and English-speaking, receive better access to contracts and opportunities. There is a desire for equality in the procurement process, emphasizing the need to understand the unique challenges and costs of living in remote communities. For instance, a participant noted dissatisfaction with the government's assistance for individuals with disabilities, stating, *"I think it's the government helping people with disabilities, but I am not satisfied because they keep telling me they will not help me until I turn 65 years old."* This sentiment reflects a frustration with age-related restrictions that may disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Another participant expressed a similar sentiment about the lack of support for disability issues, saying, *"I don't really know much about government's money, but they need to do more things. Much better to spend more."* This dissatisfaction with current affairs suggests a desire for more comprehensive and effective government intervention.

Procurement was a more obscured topic of discussion, only coming up in 17% of discussions.

Moreover, participants from various communities highlighted

iii Welcome. Welcome | Nunavummi Nangminiqagtunik Ikajuuti. (n.d.). <https://nni.gov.nu.ca/>

the need for greater transparency in the procurement process, emphasizing that essential equipment, such as wheelchairs, is often lacking. The reference to the scarcity of wheelchairs underscores the tangible impact of procurement disparities on individuals' daily lives. The desire for equality in procurement indicates a recognition that disparities can lead to unequal access to opportunities and services. Notably, the emphasis on understanding the unique challenges and costs of living in remote communities reflects an awareness that standard procurement practices may not effectively address these regions' specific needs and circumstances. This insight demonstrates a broader economic, cultural, and geographical perspective. Ultimately, the participants' collective message calls for a more inclusive and equitable approach to procurement, urging decision-makers to consider the diverse needs of all community members to enhance overall well-being.

“We need everyone to have access to these things. We don't know how these decisions are made or who gets to choose what place gets what service. And even then it doesn't last. So for me, like, access to information is empowerment and helps with our decision-making. Everyone should have access to the information they need too.”

Lack of Transparency

Participants express concern about the lack of transparency in how the government spends money. They mentioned a desire for more transparency surrounding the procurement process, with some suggesting the need for public financial statements to be issued in each community.

The issue of transparency in government spending emerges prominently in the participants' discussions, reflecting a collective concern about the lack of public access into financial processes. A participant emphasized the need for increased transparency, stating, *“Would be nice to see how they actually spend their money. Like other organizations, always have financial statements.”* This sentiment highlights a desire for openness and accountability in financial management, drawing attention to the discrepancy between government practices

and those of other organizations. The call for public financial statements in each community further underscores the participants' commitment to enhanced transparency. This request aligns with the sentiment expressed by a participant, who remarked, *"Why can't the [government] have public financial statements issued in each community for them to have more voice on how the [government] spends their money?"* The mention of the government specifically indicates a perceived lack of clarity in how funds are allocated and utilized, prompting a call for more localized insights into financial decisions.

"We need everyone to have access to these things. We don't know how these decisions are made or who gets to choose what place gets what service."

The desire for community-specific financial statements indicates a recognition that transparency should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. However, it should instead cater to individual communities' unique needs and interests. The overarching theme of the lack of transparency in government spending suggests a prevailing sense of disconnection between decision-makers and community members. This concern extends beyond mere curiosity about financial details; it reflects a broader aspiration for community involvement and empowerment in decision-making processes. In essence, participants advocate for a more inclusive financial framework that fosters transparency, community engagement, and a sense of shared responsibility in allocating and utilizing resources.

FIGURE 12 Procurement

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

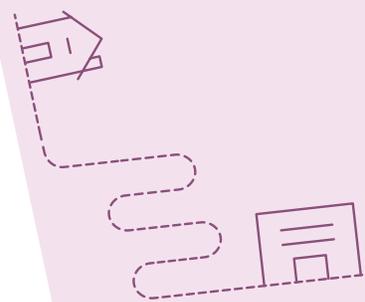
"We know what our community needs, and it's disheartening when decisions are made without consulting us."

— Study participant

Procurement

Eeta's family is eagerly awaiting more details about the new housing development. Her father and mother attend a town hall meeting to learn more.

Some community members are frustrated with the planning process. They are feeling excluded from the decision-making around this big government-funded project.



“I think it’s important, but I don’t know much about it like, because it decides where money goes and what gets funded, right? But sometimes, like, it feels like the government doesn’t really care about our community, especially, you know, when it comes to all of this that we are talking about like accessibility and support services for those, um, with disabilities, you know? We need to know more and be told about what’s happening but we are never told.”

Respondent 1: *“Definitely, because we are Canadians, and our input is important for policies.”*

Respondent 2: *“This is how I look at it. When all the government policies happened and then colonization happened, we weren’t consulted. All of these decisions were made without us, it destroyed who we are, our language and our practices. If we aren’t included now then the same thing happens but in a different way. Clouded by, by the idea of helping us, giving to us but it doesn’t help. We need more. We need to try different things to see what works and what is going to work here is different than (community name redacted).”*

Respondent 3: *“Because Inuit voices should be part of how they make decisions, in governing Canada and more so here.”*

Procurement and Transportation

Accessibility issues, especially in the context of transportation, were highlighted often. Some participants noted the difficulty in accessing public spaces due to the lack of adequate transportation options, particularly for individuals with disabilities and Elders. Many participants noted that their community used to operate a school bus as an informal community bus service. However, this service disappeared many years ago, and the reasons for its discontinuation remain unclear. Participants stressed that there needs to be more transparency about why such changes occur and more community discussion to address these barriers.

“Some of the departments, it’s so regulated you can’t get through to them to, to get funding. And then other places, it’s so loosey goosey, money is going to people that shouldn’t get.”

— Study Participant

The absence of essential services, such as a taxi service or reliable mechanics, hinders day-to-day mobility and disrupts the procurement chain. For instance, a participant shared:

“And like, another big barrier is transportation...but it’s such a big issue. I know it’s all across Nunavut ... transportation options are too limited, which can make it really hard for people to get around to like appointments or anywhere they need then they are left inside and can’t even go out. For someone who in on a wheelchair or has difficulty walking long distances not having access to transportation can really limit their ability to participate in community activities or get to the store or appointment.”

This observation encapsulates how the procurement ecosystem is impeded when basic transportation infrastructure is lacking, hindering the smooth flow of goods and services. Moreover, the intersection of disability and transportation challenges further accentuates the relevance of addressing these issues within the procurement framework. A participant shared insights into the social dimensions of the problem, noting, *“I do go out when I don’t have pressure and a lot of people don’t go out, I don’t know why like they’re either embarrassed or they don’t have any help to go out.”* This commentary highlights the societal

barriers that compound procurement challenges, as individuals with disabilities endure not only physical obstacles but also contend with societal perceptions that affect their participation in the procurement process. Therefore, addressing accessibility concerns becomes integral to fostering inclusivity within procurement, ensuring that all community members can actively engage in the process without encountering systemic barriers.

In response to these challenges, the participants advocate for subsidizing transportation means, particularly snowmobiles, within the procurement context. A participant emphasized, *“They should be purchasing stuff that is essential to the communities,”* framing the need for subsidization as a strategic procurement decision. This perspective aligns with the broader theme of advocating for resource allocation that accounts for the unique circumstances of remote areas. By subsidizing transportation means like snowmobiles, the procurement process can become more attuned to the local context, acknowledging that conventional transportation infrastructure may not be viable or cost-effective in these remote settings.

In essence, the call for subsidization is a plea for improved mobility and a strategic procurement recommendation that recognizes the symbiotic relationship between accessible transportation and an efficient procurement chain. The challenges in accessibility and transportation intricately weave into the fabric of procurement, influencing the equitable distribution of resources and services. The participants’ narratives highlight that addressing these challenges is not only a matter of logistical concern but a strategic imperative within the procurement process, emphasizing the need for inclusive and context-specific solutions that enhance community well-being and connectivity.

Awareness and Capacity

Participants noted that many Nunavummiut and local organizations have significant challenges due to insufficient awareness and training regarding procurement opportunities and processes. Information about available contracts, tender requirements, and submission deadlines often does not effectively reach local businesses and individuals. This lack of

communication and outreach results in missed opportunities for those who might otherwise be interested and capable of participating. Additionally, the complexity of procurement procedures can be daunting without adequate training and resources. Local businesses may not have access to workshops, seminars, or training programs that could help them understand the intricacies of the procurement system, prepare competitive bids, and meet regulatory requirements. Without this support, many potential participants find themselves ill-prepared to navigate the process, further limiting their chances of success.

Participants also highlighted that the limited local capacity in many Nunavut communities presents a significant barrier to participation in procurement processes. Smaller communities often have fewer local businesses and suppliers, which can struggle to meet the specific requirements and standards of procurement contracts. This scarcity of qualified local vendors results in a reliance on external companies, which not only reduces local economic benefits but also often ignores the unique needs and capabilities of the community. The high cost of doing business in Nunavut, combined with logistical challenges such as transportation and supply chain issues, exacerbates this problem. Local businesses may struggle to compete with southern companies with more significant resources, extensive networks, and economies of scale. This dynamic stifles local entrepreneurship and economic development, as opportunities that could stimulate the local economy and create jobs are often awarded to outside entities. Procurement processes are further complicated by the necessity for organizations to justify their needs to external funders, often receiving scrutiny and potential cost reductions if the necessity of their requests is questioned.

“We don’t know how to apply for these things, for these contracts and then we always get looked over. Other people can hire someone to do the proposal but we can’t do that because we don’t have the funding for things like that. And then there are challenges with the funder and what they think is best so we don’t get everything we need to run the contract.”

To address these issues, participants suggested the need for targeted initiatives that build local capacity, such as funding support, business development programs, and partnerships that

encourage collaboration between local enterprises and external companies.

Advocacy for Equality

Advocacy for the rights of individuals with disabilities was a recurring theme. Participants expressed frustration with the continuous delay of certain initiatives, with a sense that Canada's interests are prioritized over those of remote communities.

"It's important to make sure everyone's needs are considered, not just some peoples. We need to focus on inclusion and ensure that no one is left behind when it comes to support and resources, but Inuit are always left to figure it out on their own. We need better laws to protect older people too, who need help. It's scary, we need to do it for safeguarding their rights and ensuring they receive assistance in a dignified way."

The recurring theme of advocacy for the rights of individuals with disabilities underscores a deeper frustration among participants regarding perceived inequities in the prioritization of initiatives. The sentiment expressed by participants reflects a perception that the interests of Canada as a whole take precedence over the specific needs and rights of remote communities. This sentiment is encapsulated in a participant's remark, *"We're always told that it's going to happen, it's going to come, but when? We're kind of left behind. Everything's prioritized in the south."* This sentiment reveals a perceived disconnect between the promises made at a broader national level and the tangible outcomes experienced by remote communities, leading to a sense of being consistently neglected in policy and initiative prioritization.

Within the context of procurement, this sentiment has direct implications for how resources and services are allocated. The frustration shared by participants suggests a disconnect between advocacy for equality, especially for individuals with disabilities, and the actual procurement practices that unfold on the ground. It raises questions about whether the procurement process adequately integrates the unique needs and challenges experienced by individuals with disabilities in remote communities. One participant aptly indicates, *"Everything is*

delayed, you know, for years and years, for months and months. Everything is just delayed, and we have to wait.”

“We don’t know how to apply for these things, for these contracts and then we always get looked over.”

In addition, many participants noted that government funding may be provided, but without a deep understanding of the actual issues, these funds may not effectively address the problems. This disconnect can result in initiatives that do not make a meaningful impact. The lack of awareness and understanding refers to the gap between the community’s real needs and the decision-makers perception of those needs. Without proper insight into the community’s challenges, priorities can become misaligned, and solutions may not be effective. For example, if transportation is a significant barrier for individuals with disabilities, but the funding is allocated to unrelated areas or solutions that do not consider the specific accessibility challenges, the core issue remains unresolved. Misguided funding can lead to continued or even exacerbated difficulties for those affected. Therefore, addressing the underlying issues with a thorough understanding of the community’s needs is essential. This approach ensures that resources are used effectively and that initiatives truly make a difference in improving accessibility and inclusivity.

“For me, another major barrier is really the lack of awareness and understanding about all of these issues in the community because then the government might give funding for something but it doesn’t do anything because it’s not really dealing with the actual issue or doing it in a way that really makes a difference.”

The delay in addressing the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities within the broader advocacy framework also directly impacts the procurement process. It implies that the procurement decisions may not be aligned with the urgent requirements of remote communities, hindering the timely and equitable distribution of essential goods and services. Advocacy for equality, therefore, needs to be integrated at a policy level

and at the operational level of procurement to ensure that the process is responsive to the immediate and specific needs of all community members. The advocacy for equality, particularly for individuals with disabilities, is a crucial element that should inform and shape the procurement landscape.

Access to Resources and Impact on Daily Life

The impact on daily life for individuals with disabilities in remote communities is vividly illustrated through specific instances shared by participants. One participant recounts the struggles of community members who require essential equipment like wheelchairs and hearing aids. Many communities lack local suppliers or repair services for such equipment, necessitating costly and infrequent travel to southern Canada for assessments, fittings, or replacements. These barriers hinder timely access to vital assistive devices, exacerbate social isolation, and restrict participation in community life. Without reliable access to hearing aids, individuals may struggle with communication and experience barriers in education and employment.

Similarly, inadequate access to wheelchairs limits mobility and independence, affecting daily activities and overall well-being. Addressing these challenges requires targeted efforts to improve infrastructure, enhance local service provision, and reduce the financial burden on individuals and families. Ensuring equitable access to assistive devices is crucial for fostering inclusive communities where all residents are respected and supported regardless of ability.

This narrative also sheds light on the profound challenges that arise from the lack of access to such crucial tools, which significantly impede the ability of individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling and independent lives. In the context of procurement, this testimony highlights a critical gap in the current system. The challenges experienced by individuals with disabilities go beyond mere inconveniences; they directly impact the procurement decisions that dictate the availability of essential equipment. The stories shared by participants underscore the urgent need for a more inclusive and responsive process that prioritizes the procurement of specialized equipment tailored to the unique needs of individuals with

disabilities in remote communities.

For instance, one participant poignantly expresses, “*We need wheelchairs, and we need them now, not in six months or a year.*” This plea emphasizes the immediacy of the challenges experienced by individuals with disabilities and calls for a procurement process that can swiftly and effectively address these pressing needs.

Desire for Community Involvement

Some participants express a desire for community engagement in the decision-making process, particularly before funding is allocated to organizations. They emphasize the importance of community input to ensure that funds are used and managed effectively.

The desire for community involvement in the decision-making process emerges as a crucial theme among participants, reflecting a collective sentiment that the procurement decisions, especially the allocation of funds to organizations, should be shaped by the communities themselves. Participants stress the significance of incorporating community input as a pivotal phase in ensuring the effective and meaningful use of financial resources. This call for community engagement in the procurement process is deeply intertwined with the principles of inclusivity and responsiveness. Participants share anecdotes and experiences that underscore the disconnect between decision-makers and the communities they serve. One participant articulates, “*We know what our community needs, and it’s disheartening when decisions are made without consulting us.*” This sentiment encapsulates the broader desire for decision-makers to recognize the inherent knowledge and insights within the community, fostering a collaborative approach to procurement that is rooted in the lived experiences of those directly affected.

“Another big problem is that people aren’t included in making decisions that affect them like especially if it impacts them. It’s like they’re left out of the conversation when it comes to stuff that’s going to have a big impact on their lives. And that just makes it even harder for

them to get the stuff they need or be part of things but if it doesn't include people and people with disabilities, then they might not work for them at all. And that's not fair because everyone deserves to have a say in stuff that affects them. It's like they're being shut out on purpose, and that just adds to all the other barriers they're already facing. We really need to change that and make sure everyone's voice is heard equally."

In the procurement context, this desire for community involvement represents a paradigm shift toward a more participatory and community-driven decision-making process. Participants advocate for mechanisms that allow communities to actively shape the priorities and allocations of funds, ensuring that the procurement decisions align with each community's nuanced needs and aspirations. This approach enhances transparency and establishes a more equitable distribution of resources, addressing specific challenges experienced by different communities. For instance, one participant highlights the need for local input in determining which organizations receive funding: *"We should have a say in where the money goes. We know our challenges better than anyone else."* This plea emphasizes community members' intimate understanding of their unique needs, suggesting that community involvement in procurement decisions is not just a preference but a vital aspect of ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the allocated resources.

"We know what our community needs, and it's disheartening when decisions are made without consulting us."

The desire for community involvement in the procurement process reflects a commitment to reshaping decision-making dynamics. It emphasizes the need for a more collaborative and inclusive approach that recognizes the agency of communities in determining how funds are allocated. By incorporating community input, the procurement process can promote positive change, aligning financial resources with the genuine needs and aspirations of the diverse communities it serves.

"Community engagement needs to be properly done for

Elders to keep them engaged. And we need programs and projects for Elders so they're not on their own. We need to motivate them. We need input from their motivational skills."

IQ Values and Procurement

Several IQ values align and positively influence the procurement process, contributing to a more holistic and community-centered approach. The values of Tunnganarniq (fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive), Pijitsirniq (serving and providing for family and community), Aajiiqatigiinniq (decision-making through discussion and consensus), and Qanuqtuurniq (meaning being innovative and resourceful) emerge as particularly relevant in shaping a procurement framework that resonates with the principles of Inuit traditional knowledge.

Tunnganarniq, the value of fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming, and inclusive, plays a pivotal role in creating positive experiences related to accessibility in procurement. As reported by participants, an inclusive and welcoming procurement environment embodies the spirit of Tunnganarniq, contributing to a harmonious and collaborative atmosphere. In practical terms, this value translates into procurement practices prioritizing open dialogue, actively seeking input from diverse participants, and ensuring the process is accessible and accommodating to all involved. When participants feel welcomed and valued, it enhances their overall experience and contributes to a more productive and cooperative procurement journey. The positive atmosphere fostered by Tunnganarniq is conducive to transparent communication, constructive collaboration, and the establishment of solid and respectful relationships between procurement entities and the community. Moreover, the application of Tunnganarniq in procurement resonates with the cultural fabric of Inuit communities, where the tradition of hospitality and inclusiveness holds profound significance. This alignment enhances the efficacy of procurement processes and reflects a commitment to cultural sensitivity and community well-being. Tunnganarniq serves as a guiding principle, infusing procurement practices with a spirit of openness and inclusivity, ultimately creating a positive and enriching experience for all participants involved.

The commitment to Pijitsirniq, serving and providing for family and community, is evident in participants' remarks about improved accessibility in procurement. Initiatives such as subsidizing transportation means like snowmobiles underscore a dedication to serving the community by actively addressing challenges, aligning with the principle of Pijitsirniq. In practical terms, the commitment to Pijitsirniq within the procurement process manifests in actions that prioritize the well-being and needs of the community. As a tangible example, subsidizing transportation directly addresses accessibility challenges, particularly in remote areas where conventional transportation options may be limited. By investing in such initiatives, procurement practices actively serve the community's interests and ensure that the benefits of procurement are accessible to all. Moreover, the principle of Pijitsirniq reflects a holistic approach to community welfare, considering the broader impact of procurement decisions on individuals and families. Participant remarks about improved accessibility signify that when aligned with Pijitsirniq, the procurement process becomes a vehicle for positive social impact. The commitment to serving the community extends beyond the transactional aspects of procurement, fostering a sense of care and responsibility in the decision-making process. In essence, incorporating Pijitsirniq in procurement practices not only addresses immediate challenges related to accessibility but also positions the procurement process as a force for positive change and service to the community. It underscores a commitment to the broader well-being of families and communities, making it an integral component of a socially responsible and community-centric approach.

In pursuing Aajiiqatigiinniq, decision-making through discussion and consensus, participant experiences emphasize the importance of community input in the procurement process. This aligns with the Inuit tradition of collective decision-making, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. The alignment with Aajiiqatigiinniq is evident as participants desire active involvement in the procurement decisions that impact their communities. The emphasis on community input serves as a testament to the inclusive nature of decision-making processes, mirroring the Inuit tradition where discussions and consensus-building are valued. Positive participant experiences often involve instances where community members actively

contribute to the decision-making process, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered. This collaborative approach reflects the principles of Aajiiqatigiinniq and enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of procurement decisions within the community.

The procurement process also aligns with Qanuqtuurniq, being innovative and resourceful. The creative solutions to challenges noted by participants, particularly in ensuring accessible transportation options, showcase a commitment to finding innovative and resourceful ways to enhance community well-being through procurement. For instance, the call for subsidizing transportation means, such as snowmobiles, reflects a strategic and inventive approach to overcoming accessibility issues, especially in remote areas. This demonstrates responsiveness to community members' unique challenges and signifies a dedication to thinking outside conventional frameworks. Moreover, the procurement process becomes a platform for problem-solving and adapting to the community's specific needs. By embracing these values within the procurement framework, practical issues are addressed, and the community's overall well-being is enhanced through thoughtful and inventive approaches. This intersection of innovation and procurement underscores a commitment to sustainable and adaptable solutions that cater to the distinct requirements of Inuit communities.

These values collectively contribute to a procurement approach that respects the community's diverse needs, fosters an inclusive atmosphere, serves the community effectively, involves community input in decision-making, and embraces innovative solutions. Moreover, this alignment with IQ values ensures that procurement processes are effective, culturally sensitive, and rooted in the principles of Inuit traditional knowledge, ultimately enhancing community well-being and sustainable development.

Recommendations

The procurement process is crucial for fostering accessibility and inclusivity within Nunavut, especially for individuals with disabilities and Elders experiencing challenges in accessing essential goods and services. The following actionable recommendations can improve accessibility, transparency, and community engagement in the procurement processes.

- 1. Enhance Transparency and Accountability:** Governments can provide detailed procurement information and financial statements in each community to improve transparency and accountability in procurement processes. This aims to promote transparency by ensuring residents can access clear and comprehensive information regarding procurement activities and expenditures. Additionally, all procurement-related communications and documents should be available in accessible formats. This includes using plain language and formats that are easy to understand, particularly for individuals with disabilities or those with limited literacy skills. By enhancing accessibility in information sharing, governments can foster greater community engagement and participation in procurement decision-making processes.
- 2. Foster Community Engagement:** Effective community engagement ensures procurement decisions align with local needs and priorities. It is imperative to prioritize community consultations throughout the procurement process. By actively involving community members, including individuals with disabilities, in decision-making, procurement authorities can gain valuable insights into local challenges and preferences. Further, establishing robust feedback mechanisms would be beneficial. These mechanisms should facilitate ongoing communication between procurement authorities and community stakeholders, ensuring that concerns and suggestions are identified and addressed promptly. This inclusive approach will enhance the relevance and impact of procurement initiatives and strengthen trust and accountability within communities.
- 3. Promote Inclusivity and Equality:** Promoting inclusivity and equality in procurement practices requires deliberate actions to eliminate barriers and ensure equitable access to opportunities. One possible option is mandating Inuktitut, plain language and accessible formats in all procurement communications and documentation. This will ensure that information is readily understandable and accessible to all stakeholders, regardless of their abilities or background.

Moreover, developing bid and evaluation criteria that are inclusive and flexible is essential. These criteria should consider the diverse abilities and needs of vendors and service providers, promoting fair competition and expanding opportunities for participation.

4. **Support Local Capacity Building: Strengthening local capacity is vital for empowering communities and enhancing their participation in procurement opportunities.** This could involve investing in training and capacity building for local vendors and contractors. By providing relevant skills and knowledge, governments can equip local businesses with the tools needed to compete effectively for procurement contracts. Additionally, developing initiatives tailored to procure essential equipment and services, such as wheelchairs and hearing aids, is crucial. These initiatives should be designed to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities in remote areas, thereby improving accessibility and quality of life across the territory.
5. **Utilize Multiple Communication Channels: Effective communication ensures procurement information reaches a diverse audience across Nunavut.** Utilizing multiple communication channels, including online platforms, paper-based notices, and local radio broadcasts, is essential. This multi-channel approach will help reach individuals with limited internet access or who prefer traditional forms of communication. Moreover, ensuring that all information is presented in accessible formats and languages that reflect Nunavut's linguistic and cultural diversity is essential. By prioritizing inclusive communication strategies, Nunavut can enhance awareness and engagement in procurement processes, fostering a more informed and participatory community.
6. **Integrate Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles: Integrating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles into procurement practices aligns decision-making with traditional values and community wisdom.** Fundamental principles such as openness (Tunnganarniq), community service (Pijitsirniq),

consensus-building (Aajiiqatigiinniq), and innovation (Qanuqtuurniq) should guide procurement initiatives. This involves incorporating traditional knowledge and community insights into decision-making processes to ensure culturally sensitive and effective outcomes. By embracing IQ principles, governments can strengthen relationships with local communities, promote sustainable development, and foster resilience in procurement practices.

- 7. Consult and Engage with Communities Before Funding Initiatives:** Meaningful consultation with affected communities would be helpful prior to allocating funding for initiatives. Community input should directly inform funding priorities, ensuring that initiatives are relevant, impactful, and aligned with local needs. This consultative approach enhances transparency and accountability by empowering communities to shape their development trajectories.
- 8. Streamline Community Procurement Processes:** Streamlining community procurement processes could help address the immediate needs of remote communities. Simplifying administrative procedures and reducing bureaucratic barriers can expedite the procurement of essential goods and services. This streamlined approach will ensure timely delivery and enhance responsiveness to community demands, improving overall service delivery and community satisfaction. By optimizing procurement processes, governments can enhance operational efficiency and better meet the evolving needs of their diverse communities.
- 9. Empower Communities to Decide for Themselves:** Empowering communities to prioritize their needs is fundamental to fostering inclusive and responsive procurement practices. This could include decentralizing decision-making authority to local stakeholders, allowing them to identify and allocate resources based on their unique circumstances and priorities. Procurement processes can better address localized challenges and opportunities by promoting community autonomy. This participatory approach strengthens community resilience and fosters

sustainable development aligned with local aspirations and values.

Implementing these recommendations can propel governments toward a more inclusive, transparent, and responsive procurement framework. These initiatives not only address current barriers but also pave the way for equitable decision-making, where the perspectives and needs of individuals with disabilities, Elders, and remote communities are central. By prioritizing accessibility and community engagement, governments can enhance the effectiveness and equity of their procurement processes, fostering sustainable development and improving the quality of life for all residents.

Programs and Services

Accessibility Standards Canada's standards on programs and services aim to ensure inclusivity for people with disabilities across emergency measures, service delivery, and

tourism.ⁱ The emergency measures standard focuses on integrating disability needs into emergency planning, training responders, and ensuring accessible communication and facilities during crises. The accessible service delivery standard covers general accessibility requirements, communication, built environment, service animal support, provider training, and feedback mechanisms. In tourism, the standards address communication access, physical accessibility, travel accommodations, service delivery, and usability of self-service machines. These standards collectively aim to remove barriers and promote equal access to essential services and tourism experiences for individuals with disabilities.

The design and delivery of programs and services in the territory was a significant concern for Nunavummiut and was discussed in 80% of all interviews and group discussions conducted for this study. Community members were primarily concerned with access to community programming and recreation (65% of all conversations). Respondents were also concerned with the quality of services provided and access to these services (46%).

"It's not just physical barriers like no ramps or elevators, but also mental health barriers like stigma and lack of support. These really make it really hard for us to be part of the community and access services."

i Accessibility Standards Canada (n.d). Design and delivery of programs and services. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/design-and-delivery-programs-and-services#s5.2.1>

“If they can be included in these, if people with disabilities were involved, I would participate as well.”

— Study participant

Attitudinal Barriers

Many respondents reported experiencing various attitudinal barriers that prevent them from receiving complete, adequate, respectful, or inclusive service. Experiences of attitudinal barriers, including racism, were reported in 22% of all conversations. This includes community and recreational services both inside and outside the community.

The design and delivery of programs and services in the territory was a significant concern for Nunavummiut and was discussed in 80% of all interviews and group discussions conducted for this study.

Many people implicitly or explicitly shared that the kind of attitude and approach that they receive from service providers has made a marked difference in their day-to-day experience, especially for caretakers or those living with a disability. Positive experiences particularly make an impact. Respondents provided examples where service providers go “*above and beyond*” the standard of service that people in the North have come to expect. This includes things like knocking on someone’s door to remind them of an appointment or attendance at an event,

doing home visits, and being actively helpful rather than passive.

“They come knocking at our door when it’s his appointment time... here they’re very very helpful.”

“His wife is bedridden and he’s getting a lot of help through the health centre and the Elder or the home care. And he wouldn’t have done it if he lived out on the land himself. He has to look after his family, feed them and then his wife. He cannot do it alone. He’s very grateful for the support that home care is doing.”

However, many people have negative stories of stigma, which elicit feelings of self-consciousness or exclusion. This includes feeling singled out or burdened in public spaces when accommodations or assistance are required. The need for self-advocacy remains a central theme in program and service delivery. Many respondents mentioned needing to follow up multiple times with service providers, making calls without response, and pushing with increasing urgency to receive services and program participation.

Attitudinal barriers also manifest in community leadership, or lack thereof. When reporting on community action and initiatives around programs and services, many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of initiatives to enhance the quality of life of community members. One respondent said, *“we’re in the cracks, literally.”* Many people feel ignored by

Community Programs and Services

Eeta loves to sew. She just finished making a new amauti and is really proud of her work.

She would love to learn from an Elder about traditional sewing, but doesn’t know who to ask.

Eeta wishes there were more opportunities for everyone in the community to explore and learn traditional skills.

“Just to be remembered would be nice. Like this is for you. It’s not for other people. This is made for you. I think it will make me feel special, good.”

— Study participant

FIGURE 13 Community programs and services

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

those who make decisions in communities and, as a result, feel intense exclusion. Across communities, participants perceive a dismissal of disabled people's lives. There is a feeling that government leadership deems disabled Nunavummiut as less worthy with low prioritization for care.

"It's always a dead end. That's why everybody has started shutting up their mouth. Like, it's finding it pointless, because we're not heard. We're just another burden to the territory. We're just another money issue. Like, that's how some see it."

One respondent described how attitudinal barriers may be spurred by peoples' unwillingness to discuss the pressing issues. People do not want to discuss disability and intersecting issues like depression and suicide, so it becomes stigmatized and compounded with other factors, including racism.

Racism and discrimination from service providers were cited frequently; especially for service providers visiting communities on short-term contracts. People reported feeling hesitant to ask for support because of this, with one respondent explicitly stating that racial stigma around addictions makes them hesitant to ask for medication for fear of being accused of using the drugs recreationally.

"I've seen people struggle to get help when they really needed it. Like (name redacted). Did you even get any help? No, see. that's not fair. We need access here that is more cultural too, like having someone who understands. We need to break all of these, what did you call it (name redacted), like a cycle? A cycle of pain and hurt, like trauma? Inuit have too much trauma and how can we think about all these other things when we can't heal from this trauma. Our families are struggling. They are in pain. It's like, there's just not enough resources or professionals available to help everyone who's struggling. And when there are people helping, not all of them are good. They have their own ideas and think of Inuit as alcoholics or bad people."

While many people received helpful service from professionals in their community, others felt that they had been dismissed

or diminished. Further, individuals frequently mention having access to only one service or relying solely on virtual services, which significantly limits their options and can exacerbate feelings of discrimination or conflict with personal values. This situation highlights the complex interplay between accessibility, discrimination, and cultural values within federal policy frameworks. For instance, adequate mental health care is specific to the person (like finding the right therapist that brings comfort and safety), but people in the North do not have that luxury. The mental health worker assigned to the community is the only option, which can unfortunately come with apathy, racism, and dismissal to varying degrees. This can render a service ineffective and exacerbate someone's existing mental health struggle.

“Over the months, I've been getting help with nurse on calls, like teaching me stuff I didn't know. And they always ask what do you - what do you not know? And I don't know.”

Many people indicated a need for increased, or more effective, training for service providers, specifically focusing on Inuit culture and lived experiences in northern and remote communities. Many also mentioned how difficult and discouraging it is to repeat their story and traumas each time a service professional in their community changes. To this end, many people expressed a desire for services from people who are from the North and who understand the unique challenges that Inuit experience.

“One of the thing, one of the things I can think of is have either a local or someone that's been living in the North for like decades on end, who knows everything about life up north, like not just how we, like not how we how we just hunt and what not but like how we live, how we how we interact with one another and how our lifestyle is.”

“If there was any funding for that, I think like, there should be more Inuit counsellors who can travel to Inuit communities and have meetings throughout couple of weeks.”

Barriers to Care

Respondents share their frustrations with service provision in their community:

“For example, myself, I’m having a hard time getting help on questions of my granddaughter. Like, why isn’t there anyone telling me any updates about what her plan is? What happens to the father if we even going to the biological mother, like who is helping them and I don’t get updates from the social worker about it.”

“They’re not checking on their patients. They’re not doing home visits. They’re not being on top of our health.”

“Home care could do a lot more. Um, I know they’re always saying they’re short staffed, but sometimes I just want someone to come and stay with my mom for any hour or two... Yeah. And they always, they’re always asking if I need help or not. But then they don’t follow up on it... I’m constantly having to call them to remind them, “hey it’s Wednesday, it’s bath day”, uh, she needs more diapers or she’s running low on meds. I have to keep on top of them.”

“Being told, “no, there’s nothing for you. So why not, why bother trying?” So that is why a lot of people just decided to stop trying to voice out what they have in mind. It’s because our voices don’t go anywhere. It’s just a complete brick of wall they get each time. Whatever we try and do, there’s a wall that we have, that we have to climb up first and go back down. Always.”

In addition, the findings underscore a critical gap in the representation of Inuit professionals within service positions in Nunavut. Inuit professionals are perceived as better equipped to provide services that are sensitive to the community’s cultural and traditional contexts, which can lead to more effective and empathetic care. This aligns with the broader literature on the importance of culturally relevant mental health services, which suggests that providers who share cultural backgrounds with their clients can bridge gaps in understanding and trust, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes (Healey & Meadows, 2008ⁱⁱ; Newell et. al., 2019)ⁱⁱⁱ, emphasizing proper training points to systemic issues within the current training and service provision frameworks. There is a clear recognition that well-trained Inuit professionals could offer a dual benefit: improving their career prospects and skillsets while enhancing the support available to those in need. This dual benefit highlights the importance of investing in education and training programs tailored to Inuit needs and experiences. The discussion also suggests that increasing the number of Inuit professionals could contribute to broader community empowerment. By fostering leadership and providing role models within the community, these

ii Healey, G. K., & Meadows, L. M. (2008). Tradition and culture: An important determinant of Inuit women’s health. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 25–33.

iii Newell, S. L., Dion, M. L., & Doubleday, N. C. (2019). Cultural continuity and Inuit Health in Arctic Canada. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 74(1), 64–70. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2018-211856>

professionals could inspire future generations and promote a sense of self-sufficiency and resilience. This is particularly relevant in health, where trust and relatability between the provider and client are crucial for effective treatment.

“We need more Inuit professionals in the community.”

“If there are more Inuit trained mental health workers that know more about culture and traditional healing, how do I put it? For Inuit trained mental health workers, it will help a lot because they know what it is like to receive, not receive proper care. And if there were people that were trained properly, it would benefit them and also would benefit the people that are hurt.”

“Inuit have too much trauma and how can we think about all these other things when we can’t heal from this trauma.”

People also mentioned hurtful experiences in public spaces such as airports, where they feel there is insufficient employee support. This includes a lack of attentiveness, not listening when someone asks for assistance, or having to correct or instruct staff to ensure one is appropriately and safely assisted. There are also reports of overhearing harmful and hurtful language directed towards individuals with disabilities. Job discrimination is also a consequence of this attitudinal barrier.

“They’re not trained what to do with the wheelchair, so they just kind of wing it and they...make mistakes...and you get hurt.”

“And yeah, it’s, it’s just not good. I have, I have, I’ve faced a lot of discrimination from airport employees because of, you know, the fact that I need a wheelchair and they don’t wanna push me.”

In one group discussion, respondents reported positively on the impact of Jordan’s Principle (in Nunavut, known as the Inuit Child First Initiative) on the services and assistance available for their children. They highlighted a significant improvement in accessing necessary support, describing a more accommodating

and responsive system. However, many also noted persistent challenges, including the complexity of forms, lack of follow-up from service providers, and difficulties obtaining required documents (such as a doctor's note). Families reported increased satisfaction with the responsiveness of service providers when seeking help, highlighting a marked improvement compared to previous experiences navigating bureaucratic hurdles. This initiative has effectively streamlined processes and alleviated deeply-rooted frustrations related to accessing essential equipment and services, such as wheelchairs, which were previously subject to prolonged delays and denials.

“When he was three, two or three, right when we found out he'll never walk, and he was starting to get really heavy at the time. Like, we wanted a wheelchair and, and NIHB [Non-Insured Health Benefits] kept declining, denying our request. So all these years we had to carry him, borrow wheelchairs... And he kept getting denied and, we're begging. NIHB would never approve his wheelchair. But when Jordan's Principle came out, it was like, that's it.”

Quality of Service

Many respondents reported that it is often difficult to meet with a service provider or staff person in their community, specifically a specialist or project manager because they do not visit very often, are in town for a limited time, and have heavy caseloads. It can also be challenging for Nunavummiut to know when the professional will visit, as that information is not always transparent. Getting appointments with professionals stationed in the community can even be challenging due to a general lack of resources and capacity.

“It's because lack of communication then, and that the ... centre isn't providing them more information in break downs. And that's why she's just waiting and waiting but nothing happened.”

Many respondents reported that within their community, they feel that service providers often do not listen to them. For instance, doctors and nurses do not fully understand their

reported ailments or requests for specific kinds of care. One respondent described a doctor insisting that his arthritis was no longer an issue even though he still lives with the pain. Another respondent had to advocate for their child, insisting that their child's condition was much worse than the doctors would acknowledge. The parent felt continually ignored until the condition eventually worsened and was taken seriously.

Others mentioned that they have been dismissed when they request information or resources from service providers in their community. For example, one respondent described a psychiatrist who insisted that medication for mental health reasons was not necessary. People often must self-advocate to meet with specialists to receive basic care for their symptoms. For people requesting more information, clarification, etc., people often have difficulties receiving responses, timelines, and appointments.

Many respondents noted significant challenges that arise from situations that intersect between local and federal governments. For example, individuals needing medical travel often rely on local healthcare providers to manage appointments and logistics. However, inaccessible transportation options to airports or the absence of public transit can obstruct their access to critical medical flights. At airports, additional hurdles emerge, such as staff unfamiliarity with disability accommodations and pervasive stigma surrounding both visible and invisible disabilities. Boarding the aircraft itself presents further obstacles, including navigating physical barriers and encountering attitudes that may perpetuate the marginalization of individuals with disabilities. These cumulative barriers underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms prioritizing accessibility, communication, and inclusivity throughout every stage of the medical travel process.

The challenges reported regarding the accessibility and quality of services in Nunavut are compounded by the frequent turnover of staff in the North. Respondents highlighted difficulties in accessing services due to infrequent visits and unclear scheduling information, reflecting broader systemic communication and resource allocation issues. Further, the perceived lack of attentiveness from service providers within the community exacerbates frustrations, with individuals often

feeling ignored. This instability and inadequate communicative environment underscores the additional burden Nunavummiut experience when new providers regularly cycle through their communities, necessitating continuous reestablishment of trust and explanation. These challenges not only hinder the provision of timely and effective support but also underscore the urgent need for sustained efforts to improve infrastructure and support systems in the region.

“I feel it’s kind of hard because we in our community there’s always a different person coming in and it’s very hard to see a new person and having to repeat what’s going on and it’s just no fun having to get a new person coming in.”

Further, the lack of follow-up and follow-through compounds these challenges. As highlighted by one respondent, promises of wheelchair accessibility improvements and advocacy efforts on their behalf often go unfulfilled, with no communication or action taken by service providers. This lack of accountability and responsiveness further undermines trust and perpetuates feelings of neglect among community members relying on essential services. Addressing these issues requires policy reforms and a commitment to transparent communication and accountable service delivery throughout government systems in Nunavut.

“Wheel-chair accessibility was supposed to be built. Physio was supposed to call housing on my behalf to build wheel-chair access, rails and a new door, I have never heard back from them.”

The reported challenges in service-provider interactions, such as feeling ignored or experiencing dismissiveness from professionals, are broader service care and rights issues.

While the federal government’s jurisdiction does not include health specifically, these issues highlight opportunities for federal agencies to influence policies and practices that improve overall service accessibility and quality. For instance, federal programs and services can advocate for guidelines or best practices that promote transparent communication between service providers and users, ensuring that essential

“I think it starts with understanding Inuit, and who we are, and where we came from.”

— Study participant

information reaches individuals in a timely and reliable manner. This approach aligns with federal objectives to enhance service accessibility and reliability across different sectors, fostering a more cohesive and efficient service delivery framework.

Similarly, noted that initiatives can promote person-centred practices and enhance cultural competency among providers. This can extend to funding programs or providing resources that enable providers to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of Nunavummiut, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, there was discussion about the need for improved collaboration between different levels of government and stakeholders to address systemic challenges in service provision. This could involve supporting research initiatives, piloting projects, or funding allocations to improve service coordination and integration across sectors like education, social services, and community health. By fostering these partnerships and initiatives, agencies can play a crucial role in enhancing outcomes and overall well-being in Nunavut despite the complexities of jurisdictional responsibilities.

Community, Recreational, and Cultural Programming

Many people reported that they cannot participate fully in their community, feeling excluded or isolated. Some feel as though

there are not enough programs currently available. For those who feel programming is adequate there are still concerns about accessibility and transportation. Disability can include physical impairments or pain, making programs and community events inaccessible or unsuitable.

Many programs in the North have difficulty staying in operation because of a lack of funds, commitment, leadership initiative, and space. One respondent mentioned that a new building was just built in their community, but it is not accessible. They hoped to do programming out of that building, but there is no ramp. Several people mentioned that there are not enough opportunities to participate in community programming because these events have capacity constraints with participants chosen through raffles. There is a desire for increased capacity to run programs for more people or even specific programs directed towards groups such as Elders and people with disabilities.

“Games or something, get together that much slower paced for them. Or, I don’t know how to word it, but it doesn’t always have to be often, but once in a while. Just to be remembered would be nice. Like this is for you. It’s not for other people. This is made for you. I think it will make me feel special, good.”

“Like, I’d like to see all the people with disabilities in one room.”

Communities often expressed a strong desire for a central gathering space that remains accessible beyond scheduled events. Such a space would serve as a hub for casual socializing, fostering community bonds and connections. Unfortunately, existing community halls and similar spaces are often restricted to event schedules or have fallen into disrepair. This gap highlights a crucial need for accessible facilities incorporating accessibility features, ensuring that all community members can participate in social activities and access essential services. Further, many community members mentioned significant challenges in initiating and sustaining local programs and services. These efforts typically depend on the initiative and leadership of a few dedicated individuals and ongoing funding. Federal support can play a pivotal role here by establishing

guidelines that promote establishing and maintaining inclusive spaces and programs. Specifically, there is a notable demand for youth-oriented initiatives and intergenerational programs encouraging learning and social interaction between Elders and young people. By integrating these priorities into federal accessibility standards for services and programs, the government can effectively address community needs and promote equitable access to essential resources across Canada.

“Even just if somebody is struggling from our context with mental health issues or, you know, in a family wellness context with capacity issues, if they’re confused or and they’re wandering around and it’s freezing cold, like we need places where these folks can go that are socially engaging.”

“And another thing I would like to see, which [community] did when I wasn’t there, is a women’s circle or men’s circle where they talk about their, whatever they want to talk about.”

Respondent: *“Youth activities, traditional activities for youth. With Elders as teachers.”*

Researcher: *“Yeah. So, like, maybe programs on the land, hunting-”*

Respondent: *“On the land or like, even in the community. Learn how to make Qamutiik.”*

“We need lots of support and resources. If we, if they built a youth centre or gathering Elder centre and they would talk to us and help us with organizing the supplies that we need. They would tell us how to prepare the animals food, how to prepare the animals hide and how to sow with others. How to make kayak with boys, how to make Qamutik, we need lots of resources that we need.”

Respondents mentioned that programming should be sensitively designed to accommodate these realities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all community members. For instance, participants mentioned that many cultural activities offered by the government are traditionally held on the land,

involving practices such as hunting, berry picking, and travel. However, these activities are not accessible to a significant portion of the population, resulting in their exclusion from cultural participation. In addition, a substantial number of respondents expressed feeling unable to fully engage in these land-based cultural programs due to accessibility barriers. To address these challenges, participants noted that programs and services should prioritize inclusive design that considers the diverse needs of community members, including those with disabilities and Elders. By promoting accessible alternatives to land-based activities and ensuring inclusive cultural programming, governments can support community well-being and cultural continuity across Canada.

“Like this is for you. It’s not for other people. This is made for you. I think it will make me feel special, good.”

Shelters, Safe Houses and Food Banks

Many communities lack safe spaces for individuals in need, including victims of domestic violence, children needing refuge, people requiring addiction support, those experiencing homelessness, or individuals seeking companionship and support. One respondent highlighted the absence of a safety plan for emergency housing, which underscores the urgent need for better support systems and infrastructure. In communities where food banks are available, the resources are inadequate in fulfilling the needs of the community. Several participants advocated for more inclusive and expansive criteria for shelters, suggesting they should serve a broader demographic beyond women and provide more than short-term or overnight stays to address the diverse needs and challenges within communities.

“There is no shelter here. So that will help with the women. But then we also forgot about the men. So we need to have the men shelter here as well.”

In addition, many respondents highlighted the challenge of limited family shelters, noting that this issue is particularly distressing within Inuit communities where kinship ties are

Being Left Out

Respondents shared experiences of being excluded from community gatherings and celebrations:

“As it is now we don't have a voice. We don't have a voice, and we don't have an organization that is going to be dealing with our issues and educating our community members also. Where we're coming from. Just take an example of fishing derby. There was fishing derby and also [contest name] contest last Saturday. Lots of activities for 99% of the people. But the ones who are like myself, disability, and also elderly people. We were not really invited to the party. And there was no other program or anything organized for them. So something that just flew by them, where they had no participation. The only way we can set that problem within the community, is to get ourselves organized. But up until now, we've been very quiet.”

“I feel very left out of my community sometimes because a lot of the activities that go on in the community are nature based. Going out on the land and hunting, or going, collecting, walking around and collecting berries, or going and walking out to the, to the water at [community park], and having a bonfire. And a lot of those things aren't accessible to me, because not only is it really hard for me to walk and, you know, go out on uneven terrain. Those things just, well I definitely love that they're an option for people because I think it's necessary, especially in an Indigenous community, where you really want to connect with the traditional elements of being Indigenous. I think that, that also does a disservice to the people who cannot participate in the same level. And because of that, on the community level, I often feel left out because I cannot participate in the same way that my able-bodied peers do.”

deeply valued. The scarcity of shelters capable of accommodating entire families poses a significant obstacle, often forcing families to separate during times of crisis. This situation not only disrupts essential familial bonds but also undermines the cultural and social fabric of Inuit. Addressing this shortage is crucial to uphold the well-being and unity of Inuit families, ensuring they have access to safe and supportive spaces during challenging times.

Participants noted historical and ongoing mistrust of institutional services often discourages individuals from accessing shelter programs. This mistrust stems from a long history of negative experiences with institutions, which have frequently failed to respect and incorporate Inuit values and perspectives. Building trust requires consistent and culturally sensitive engagement. Participants emphasized the importance of service providers who understand and respect Inuit culture and are committed to maintaining an open and respectful dialogue with the community. Further, many individuals seeking shelter services have experienced significant trauma. This trauma can greatly impact their willingness or ability to engage with programs that are not trauma-informed or culturally sensitive. Participants highlighted that traditional Western approaches fail to recognize the unique ways in which trauma affects Inuit and communities. Without a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach, shelter services risk alienating the people they aim to help. Participants stressed the need for shelters to incorporate trauma-informed practices that acknowledge the

complexities of colonialism to provide appropriate support. This includes creating safe, welcoming environments and offering services that are flexible and responsive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma.

Participants shared that figuring out how to access the shelter was challenging due to a lack of transparency around eligibility and support systems. They often found themselves kicked out for various reasons, including someone's assumptions regarding intoxication. In such cases, individuals were frequently banned from the shelter without the opportunity to share their side of the story, further complicating their situation. Many participants noted that shelters operate under rigid rules and limited resources. This issue is compounded by policies that may restrict employment opportunities or fail to provide adequate pathways for residents to accumulate the necessary savings for first and last months' rent. As a result, individuals remain trapped in a cycle of reliance on temporary accommodations without the means to achieve long-term stability and autonomy. Participants emphasized that addressing these systemic barriers is essential to creating a more supportive and empowering environment.

Finally, participants noted that historical and ongoing mistrust of institutional services often discourages individuals from accessing shelter programs. This mistrust stems from a long history of negative experiences with institutional services, which have frequently failed to respect and incorporate Inuit values and perspectives. One participant mentioned;

"They send us to places to get better and it doesn't help us, it, we can't get better because we have to leave our family or our home and like, it's like we are being punished. They send us to these institutions to just send us away, like they used to do. These places aren't healthy. I went to [name] and it was, they did smudging and we don't do smudging. It was so sad."

Building trust requires consistent and culturally sensitive engagement. Participants emphasized the importance of service providers who understand and respect Inuit culture and are committed to maintaining an open and respectful dialogue with the community.

Further, many individuals seeking shelter services have experienced significant trauma. This trauma can impact their willingness or ability to engage with programs that are not trauma-informed or culturally sensitive. Participants highlighted that traditional Western approaches often ignore the unique ways in which trauma affects Inuit individuals and communities. Without a trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach, participants noted that shelter services risk alienating those they aim to help. Participants stressed the need for shelters to incorporate trauma-informed practices that acknowledge the impact of trauma and provide appropriate support. This includes creating safe, welcoming environments and offering services that are flexible and responsive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma.

Ambulances and Emergency Services

A common theme among respondents pertains to a lack of adequate ambulance services. This issue arises for several reasons. In some communities, ambulances are non-existent. In others where ambulances are available, there are often no licensed drivers, or the vehicles are not sufficiently insured to transport community members. Additionally, the harsh climate presents challenges in proper storage and maintenance, leading to frequent breakdowns. It is not uncommon for nurses to drive and attend to patients in the back of the ambulance.

Respondents shared anecdotes of relying on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for help or transport to the health centre under precarious circumstances. Some mentioned using four-wheelers, sleds wrapped in blankets, walking, or other vehicles to reach medical facilities.

Another obstacle is the restrictions on ambulance use. For example, in one community, the ambulance can only transport patients from the health centre to the airport for medical emergencies, as that is its only insured purpose. Consequently, individuals in need must find their way from their homes to the health centre on their own.

“I remember one time a boy was having a seizure and I basically had him in my lap. But we had to wait for

someone in the community to come here with a vehicle to then drive us to the health centre.”

“I know even one of a colleague from here died by suicide about a month ago. And at the time, her partner basically had to run into the road to get her there. But she, she died. How, you know, we’re in the 20th, 21st century and if anything, it’s made it worse for people because you have an expectation of having everything everyone else does. So people aren’t using dog sleds. They’re not hunting for their food. But then on the other hand, you don’t have everything you should.”

Numerous stories emerged of loved ones using creative and often less-than-ideal methods to bring kin to medical facilities. Tragically, Nunavummiut shared accounts of loss or irreversible medical complications due to delays in receiving timely medical care. Beyond the absence of emergency vehicles, some communities highlighted the lack of infrastructure to run and manage these vehicles effectively. Residents identified a lack of preparedness in sending vehicles to communities without garages for storage, leading to issues in the harsh climate. Additionally, inappropriate insurance policies have left ambulances idle, further exacerbating the problem. This dire situation exemplifies the urgent need for comprehensive improvements in emergency infrastructure and support across Nunavut.

“We need more people to learn how to drive the ambulance [...] Because few times when my boys are, you know, they get seizures. We have a hard time trying to find [...] ambulance [...] And no vehicle to go down. And they’re saying they got no insurance to pick up people from their house to go to the health centre. Like when they get seizures [...] We call them on their phone. And they said, oh, you gotta find your own ride to go down. It’s hard to find [...] cause Hamlet was saying they got no insurance to pick up people up they only got insurance for people from medivacs.”

Training community members to operate emergency vehicles was recommended to ensure someone is always available for emergency response. Not all community members have driver’s

licences, and specific training would significantly enhance the community's capacity to respond to emergencies effectively. This training would empower local residents and ensure that critical emergency services are more readily available, reducing reliance on external assistance and improving overall response times.

“And that even goes for our ambulance. So we’ve had an ambulance here for I think it’s about a year or a year and a half. And unfortunately, we have no one to drive it because they don’t have the proper license. And that’s really affected us because we have to transport health center calls. We have to transport in a ford F150. And sometimes I dealt with a client that literally unfortunately, she passed away the next day, but we put her on the stretcher and it was so cold we couldn’t put her in the bed of the truck cause it was so cold she will freeze. So we literally put her in the back. It was a - it was a four door, a crew cab. And we had to sit in the back of the truck to keep a door open because the door wasn’t able to close. So, yeah, we do have a transportation issue here and there is no cab in town or anything like that.”

The stories shared by community members vividly illustrate the human impact of infrastructure shortcomings. While federal guidelines aim to ensure inclusivity across emergency measures, service delivery, and tourism, their implementation in Nunavut often encounters significant challenges. Community members frequently express concerns about access to essential services like medical care and emergency response, citing issues such as insufficient ambulance services, inadequate training for local drivers, and operational barriers due to climate and infrastructure limitations. These challenges not only impact the timely delivery of care but also exacerbate feelings of exclusion among individuals with disabilities, who encounter attitudinal barriers and systemic neglect in service provision. Moreover, the need for culturally competent care is emphasized, with calls for more Inuit professionals and tailored training programs to better serve the community's unique needs. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts between federal and territorial authorities to bridge gaps in service accessibility and quality, ensuring that all Nunavummiut can access the support they need with dignity and respect.

Eligibility Requirements

Participants noted significant barriers to accessing programs and services in Nunavut, particularly those designed to support vulnerable populations. A prominent example is a program intended to enhance labour market inclusion for people with disabilities. Despite its well-meaning intentions, this program encounters significant challenges in Nunavut due to a disconnect with local understanding and realities. The program requires participants to self-identify as having a disability to be eligible. However, the concept of disability does not always align with Inuit perspectives and terminologies. Many Inuit do not use the term “*disability*” in the same way as it is understood in southern Canada, leading to a lack of self-identification and subsequent underutilization of the program. Additionally, there are substantial issues related to diagnosis and familiarity with disabilities due to the severe lack of healthcare services in the North. Many individuals who might benefit from such programs have never been formally diagnosed due to Nunavut’s scarcity of healthcare professionals and services. This lack of access means that even those who might meet the program’s criteria cannot participate because of this complexity.

Participants also highlighted the broader implications of these barriers. Many people remain unaware of their conditions or how to seek support without access to appropriate healthcare services. Consequently, potential beneficiaries are left unsupported, further marginalizing those needing help the most.

The nuances around these issues are profound. For instance, the requirement for self-identification not only alienates individuals who do not connect with the term “*disability*” but also places an undue burden on those who might be dealing with the stigma associated with disabilities. This stigma can be particularly strong in small, close-knit communities where privacy is limited, and people fear being judged or misunderstood. Moreover, the lack of diagnostic services means that many children and adults with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, and other challenges do not receive the supports that could significantly improve their quality of life. Participants underscored the need for culturally sensitive programs adapted to the realities of life in Nunavut. This includes redefining eligibility criteria to better

reflect Inuit understandings of health and ability, increasing healthcare access to ensure proper diagnosis and support, and launching community-based awareness campaigns to educate people about available resources and how to access them.

IQ Values and Programs and Services

The challenges experienced in the design and delivery of programs and services in Nunavut are deeply intertwined with Inuit societal values and IQ values. Inuit society places a strong emphasis on community well-being, collective responsibility, and respect for Elders and cultural traditions. However, systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure and limited access to culturally competent services undermine these values. For instance, the reliance on emergency services that are often inaccessible or poorly equipped reflects a disconnect from the community's values of mutual support and care. Also, the persistent attitudinal barriers and lack of representation of Inuit professionals in service roles contradict IQ values, emphasizing the importance of cultural continuity and respect for diverse perspectives.

Addressing these issues requires aligning federal accessibility standards with Inuit societal values, prioritizing inclusivity, and fostering community-driven solutions. This approach respects and reinforces the cultural fabric of Inuit communities and enhances the effectiveness and relevance of programs and services. By integrating IQ values into service design, such as promoting community-driven initiatives and supporting local leadership, governments can foster a more responsive and culturally relevant approach to service provision, emergency services, and community programming. This holistic integration aims to empower communities, uphold traditional knowledge, and ensure that services are not only accessible but also respectful of Inuit values and ways of life.

For instance, enhancing emergency response systems could empower local communities to lead in preparedness and response efforts. This includes training community members in essential first aid and emergency response skills, ensuring that traditional knowledge and community expertise are central to the response process. Supporting local initiatives, such as

community-run emergency shelters that reflect Inuit values of kinship and collective support during crises, further integrates these values into service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding programs and services in Nunavut, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified barriers and enhance accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with disabilities, particularly in program and service delivery:

1. **Address Attitudinal Barriers:** To combat attitudinal barriers within service provision, training programs focused on cultural competency and sensitivity toward Inuit communities must be developed and implemented. These programs should emphasize respectful and inclusive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, aiming to reduce the stigma and discrimination reported by community members. By fostering a culturally sensitive approach among service providers, Governments can improve the overall inclusivity and quality of service delivery.
2. **Enhanced Community Programming:** It would be helpful to invest in creating and maintaining accessible community spaces and facilities. This includes ensuring that community programming is inclusive and accessible, catering to the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, Elders, and youth. By enhancing accessibility in community spaces, Nunavut can promote social inclusion and ensure equitable participation in local activities and events.
3. **Support for Cultural Activities:** Promoting inclusive design in cultural programming is vital to accommodate diverse abilities within Nunavut communities. This involves offering alternative, accessible options for land-based activities and ensuring that cultural events are accessible to all community members, regardless of their physical abilities.
4. **Improvements in Emergency Services:** Address critical gaps in emergency infrastructure is paramount. This

includes ensuring adequate ambulance services across all Nunavut communities, which involves training local drivers, maintaining vehicles, and securing appropriate insurance coverage. By strengthening emergency services, Nunavut can enhance the safety and well-being of its residents, ensuring timely and effective responses to medical emergencies throughout the territory.

5. **Advocacy and Collaboration:** To improve service coordination and integration, foster collaboration among federal, territorial, and municipal governments. Advocating for policies that enhance transparency, accountability, and communication between service providers and community members is essential. By promoting collaborative efforts, governments can streamline service delivery processes and address systemic challenges that hinder accessibility and inclusivity.
6. **Empowerment of Inuit Professionals:** Increasing the representation of Inuit professionals within service positions is crucial. This can be achieved through targeted education and training programs that equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to provide culturally sensitive and effective care. By empowering Inuit professionals, Nunavut can enhance service quality and responsiveness to community needs, fostering a stronger sense of cultural continuity and trust.
7. **Expansion and Accessibility of Shelters and Food Banks:** Expand the capacity and inclusivity of shelters and food banks is essential to meet the diverse needs of community members, including those with disabilities. Ensuring shelters are safe, accessible, and welcoming for all individuals seeking support promotes equity and social inclusion. Retrofitting current shelters with universal design principles and funding longer-term second-stage housing programs can further enhance accessibility and support for vulnerable populations.
8. **Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing robust feedback mechanisms is critical to engage community members in the planning,

implementation, and evaluation of programs and services. This ensures that initiatives remain responsive to the evolving needs and priorities of Nunavut residents. By promoting active community engagement, governments can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of its accessibility initiatives, fostering a participatory approach to decision-making.

9. Long-term Sustainability and Funding: Allocating sustainable funding resources is essential for supporting ongoing initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and inclusivity across Nunavut. Prioritizing long-term investments in infrastructure, training, and service delivery capabilities ensures continuity and resilience in meeting the territory's accessibility goals. By securing adequate funding, Nunavut can sustainably enhance its capacity to provide inclusive services and opportunities for all residents.

By implementing these recommendations, Nunavut can significantly improve the accessibility, inclusivity, and quality of life for individuals with disabilities, fostering a more equitable and supportive environment for all community members. These efforts not only align with federal accessibility standards but also reflect a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of Nunavummiut in accessing essential services and participating fully in community life.

Information and Communication Technology

Accessibility Standards Canada focuses on addressing barriers to accessibility in information and communication technology (ICT) products and services, as well as artificial intelligence (AI)

systems.ⁱ One of Accessibility Standards Canada's priority areas is addressing barriers to accessibility in ICT. In ICT, common areas where people with disabilities experience barriers include websites, software, electronic devices, and mobile apps. These barriers can hinder access to information and services crucial for daily life. In the realm of artificial intelligence systems, Accessibility Standards Canada highlights several areas of concern. People with disabilities may encounter barriers such as exclusion from the design, development, implementation, and use of AI systems. This exclusion can result in systems that do not cater to their specific needs or challenges. Additionally, accessibility issues can arise in the evaluation and improvement stages of AI, limiting the participation and feedback from individuals with disabilities. Further, privacy concerns regarding disability data are another critical area. Lack of adequate privacy measures can compromise the confidentiality of personal information, posing risks to individuals with disabilities. ASC emphasizes the importance of clear and ethical management in AI systems to ensure transparency and fairness. Establishing robust ethical guidelines and mechanisms for supervision is crucial in mitigating these barriers and promoting equitable access to AI technologies for all individuals, regardless of their disabilities.

Nunavummiut utilize various information and communication technologies, which was discussed in 41% of the group

i Accessibility Standards Canada (n.d.). Information and communication technologies. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/information-and-communication-technologies>

“I’m using almost 400 dollars just for my connection to communicate with my brother.”

— Study participant

discussions and interviews. This highlights technology’s critical role in facilitating communication in remote communities. However, Nunavummiut encounter significant barriers related to accessibility in information and communication technology (ICT) and artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

Access to Internet and Infrastructure

Internet accessibility presents a major challenge due to limited and unreliable infrastructure in remote communities, exacerbated by high costs and inconsistent service quality due to weather. The affordability of devices like computers and smartphones is another hurdle, making them inaccessible to many residents, while the scarcity of technical support services further complicates their use. Cultural and linguistic factors also play a role, with barriers in accessing ICT in Inuktitut and syllabics impacting those less proficient in English. In terms of AI systems, there are concerns about exclusion from the design and development phases, which can lead to solutions that do not meet local needs or cultural sensitivities. Implementation issues, such as inadequate accessibility features and privacy concerns regarding personal data, further inhibit equitable access.

“I’ve always just said like, Nunavut and Iqaluit it’s some of the most difficult places to have, like a disability or

different level of ability. Especially if you don't have access to sort of, like a phone or the internet. Like, it's hard to kind of know what's going on. Know what supports are out there. And also just like getting, getting around, and getting involved in things is, is difficult."

Despite these challenges, technologies like local radio and social media platforms remain critical for communication in Nunavut due to their accessibility and cultural relevance. Addressing these barriers requires technological solutions and policies prioritizing inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement, ensuring that ICT and AI advancements benefit all Nunavummiut equally.

Nunavummiut utilize various information and communication technologies, which was discussed in 41% of the group discussions and interviews.

Many individuals referenced the radio as an essential technology, *"radio is [a] very good communicative thing within the local community because that's [what] everybody listens to ...when they hear that there is [a] program going on that day, everybody share[s] that information."* As a bilingual, free, and audible technology, radio was cited by some as the most accessible method of communication in the territory.

Literacy, particularly for Elders, can be a barrier to online and in-person communications. Many respondents see the radio as the best option for distributing information, especially for Elders. However, some communities have also had issues with consistent radio service.

"Usually always the best way to do it is through local radio to get some, to get some people's opinions... Yeah. Most people listen to radio still... A lot of people listen to local radio."

Landlines were referenced as a more reliable method of communication than cell phones. Cable television is a welcome addition to homes, though some Nunavummiut mentioned they

could not afford it. Email, social media, and video games are a part of everyday life for many Nunavummiut, with Facebook being the most frequently referenced social media platform.

Facebook, much like the radio, provides an accessible way for community members to connect and share resources and information. Many respondents described turning to Facebook and the radio when needing a ride or food.

The majority of Nunavummiut spoke of accessing, or wishing to access the internet. The speed and stability of internet service varied in each community. Some Nunavummiut opted out of accessing the internet for reasons such as wanting to stay present in daily life and being concerned about information privacy. As stated by one respondent, *“physical presence is everything.”* While satellite internet has added some competition to the market, high cost and low-quality internet service was a barrier cited by many respondents, *“you’re paying more for less.”* In homes already running on limited resources for fundamental needs, internet was often too expensive to keep as a monthly service.

Weather impacts on internet and cellular service were inhibitors to accessing the internet consistently. Further barriers to accessing the internet were: lack of technological knowledge, data caps, the high cost of computers and cell phones, and difficulties accessing syllabic keyboards.

“Sometimes, it’s hard to get a good connection. It always drops and that makes it hard to do things like talk to people who live somewhere else like, if the internet worked better we could do more things online like school, which would be really helpful.”

— Study participant

Using Information and Communication Technology

Eeta enjoys using Facebook to stay connected with her friends.

However, the internet connection in Eeta’s home can be unreliable, and the cost is very high. Eeta’s family spends \$200 a month, and always runs out of data before the month is done.

She’s thought about maybe taking a course online, or looking for a new remote job — but not without a better internet connection.

FIGURE 14 Using Information and communication technology

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

Differences in Perspective

Nunavummiut varied in their perspectives on information technology use in the territory. Some respondents hoped for better internet service in the future to improve access to employment and educational opportunities. Several respondents mentioned work-from-home opportunities, with the caveat that poor internet service and crowded housing would need to be improved before one could work online.

“They should make sure the internet works better in the North, especially since we’re so far away and we have to use internet or phone to talk to our family. Sometimes, it’s hard to get a good connection it always drops and that makes it hard to do things like talk to people who live somewhere else like, if the internet worked better we could do more things online like school, which would be really helpful.”

Community announcements, news, buy and sell pages and weather monitoring are valued features of the internet. Connecting with others over the internet or through phone calls allows Nunavummiut to keep strong relationships with loved ones in other communities and the south. The high cost of airfare has led some Nunavummiut to, *“rely on Facebook because it’s so expensive to travel nowadays.”*

The Internet and technological

Using Facebook

Respondents describe how Facebook is an important way to maintain social connection in remote communities:

“When I need help I go through Facebook and people respond positively. I enjoy that.”

“And I know personally, when I go on Facebook (community name redacted) announcements that’s, that’s this community, people actually help other people. Sometimes they can’t help them all the time, but uh people here are very much community here, they are out with residents and community members, they’re not afraid to ask and be like, Hey, I have no food. I need help, right.”

“Yes, I use my phone all the time and I always text my mom and see how she’s doing, wonder what she’s up to. And I use my phone a lot... Internet and Facebook and texting and everything, really this time it’s really good, too, when you’re far away from each other and you need that little bit of family.”

Respondent: *“Yeah, he always used to say “I hate facebook” I told you not to. I hate Facebook. Now he’s really into it. Like he knows what’s going on in town. Or somebody’s got hurt or, somebody’s sick or there’s a meeting there or activity or...”*

Researcher: *“Yeah, so he’s keeping like, up to date. On what’s happening.”*

Respondent: *“Yeah. Yeah.”*

Researcher: *“That’s awesome.”*

Respondent *“Instead of us telling him (giggles)”.*

equipment expense has some Nunavummiut hoping for government subsidies for information technology. However, some respondents posited that too much time online takes away from what matters most, such as visiting others and being on the land. There may be a generational divide in technology use, *“I had to learn how to ask [someone] younger than me how it works.”* Older generations were especially bothered by their loved one’s frequent phone use, and some respondents found that in-person communication was more direct and effective—those who wish to access the Internet but are unable to express feeling isolated. *“I think it’s been like three years without a phone and I’m still having some trouble finding friends today.”* Some respondents felt that internet access is a part of a greater problem with infrastructure in the territory, *“just like everything else in the North, technology’s way behind. And it’s very expensive...it’s not... very practical to...have expensive internet. The rates here and the speed are way behind the rest of Canada.”*

“If the internet worked better we could do more things online like school, which would be really helpful.”

Accessing Services and Accommodations

Internet and phone-based services have allowed Nunavummiut to access resources beyond their communities. Some respondents mentioned that phone counselling provides a more confidential option, but one noted, *“I like to see their facial expression while talking.”* Some individuals may be more likely to access online or phone services with a counsellor from out of town, as it reduces the risk of information spreading within the community. Improving internet service to consistently support video calling in every community would greatly enhance service delivery in the territory. Online support groups have also been crucial for connecting with others who have experienced similar circumstances. When medical and mental health professionals cannot work in the community year-round, phone and internet-based services help bridge service gaps. However, some Nunavummiut have expressed that the most effective services are in person, as *“it’s also about developing relationships,*

and you can't develop relationships with a computer screen." Additionally, individuals have used radio or online platforms to request assistance with food and transportation. Radio and community Facebook groups facilitate opportunities for natural food and resource sharing, fostering a sense of community support.

Technological barriers, such as needing to use fax machines and computers to apply for services have caused issues with Nunavummiut procuring necessary resources.

Researcher: *"We talked some, you mentioned barriers that stuck out to you from the paperwork. You're experiencing barriers?"*

Respondent: *"Yeah very much. Sometimes when I want to work with CRA, I have to go to the Hamlet office to try and get all my personal stuff to, to them. And my, my letters come in from them, you know, that's from our public service. Then it's, it's supposed to be kind of like privacy... No, not everybody has access to that... That's the problem. In this small community."*

Researcher: *"Yes. People don't have privacy?"*

Respondent: *"Yeah... We have access to Internet. It's the limitation I have. I struggle... because of my disability... so the limitation is very hard."*

Technological barriers can also arise for some Nunavummiut in terms of employment.

"I don't have physical barriers perhaps, but intellectual barriers are there. We are a society that's always changing and you know, one will never know everything about their job. We are always learning. So the barriers are there. Computer barriers, software barriers, they are all there. That the things I even struggle with people were telling me you are not struggling with. Cause they have some of the more intellectual ability to complete the task, the ones I struggle, so those barriers are there irrespectively."

One participant expressed frustration that the current systems lack alternative modes of delivery, including in-person communication, or alternative forms of interaction, such as texting or messaging:

“Everything is form based or phone based. Every single goddamn mother[...]-ing thing in every one of our systems. Every. Single. Thing. Is form based or phone based. Literally.”

Despite some Nunavummiut sharing that their disabilities have made it challenging to use information technology, many Nunavummiut feel as though they have benefited from the use of information technology. Keeping in contact with members of one’s community has been aided by the internet but as stated by one respondent, *“it’s not the same”* as in-person connection. Those with barriers to verbal communication have used phones, iPads and other assistive devices to aid in communication. Others with memory loss have used their phones to aid with employment, *“I have my phone to set reminders for things...if I did not have a map on my phone with all the health numbers, I would be completely lost because...I can’t remember which order they’re in.”* Housebound individuals stated that their loved ones have purchased cell phones for them to reduce isolation. Information technology has opened up opportunities that were previously inaccessible to disabled Nunavummiut, but barriers to accessing those opportunities remain.

IQ Values and Information and Communication Technology

The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) and artificial intelligence (AI) systems intersects with core Inuit societal values, reflecting both opportunities and challenges shaped by community needs and cultural norms. Accessibility Standards Canada’s efforts to enhance ICT accessibility resonate deeply with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, which emphasizes communal well-being, inclusivity, and respect for traditional knowledge. However, barriers such as unreliable internet infrastructure, high costs of devices, and limited technical support present significant challenges in remote communities, highlighting the need for solutions grounded in IQ principles.

The community's reliance on platforms like social media and local radio reflects their resourcefulness (Qanuqtuurungniq), despite persistent challenges such as high costs and unreliable infrastructure. This resourcefulness underscores the commitment to maintaining communication channels vital for sharing information and fostering community support. Moreover, the desire for improved internet service and technological literacy demonstrates the value of Pilimmaksarniq, emphasizing the community's proactive approach to developing skills and knowledge necessary for utilizing and benefiting from modern technologies.

Respect for others (Pijitsirniq) is apparent in discussions addressing barriers experienced by individuals with disabilities in accessing ICT and AI systems. The community acknowledges and seeks to mitigate these barriers, reflecting a respectful approach to inclusivity and understanding of diverse needs within their midst. Further, concerns about the environmental impact of technology, such as satellite internet and electronic waste, resonate with the value of Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq, highlighting the community's commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible technological use.

In addressing these challenges, Nunavummiut emphasize the importance of consensus decision-making (Ajiiqatigiinni) and working together (Piliriqatigiinni) to develop inclusive policies and solutions. They advocate for policies that prioritize community engagement and ensure equitable access to technological advancements, thereby promoting collective well-being and sustainable development in the digital age. These values collectively shape their perspectives on accessibility, community resilience, and the ethical use of technology, illustrating how IQ principles guide their interactions with and adaptation to modern ICT and AI systems.

Recommendations

Improving accessibility to Information and Communication Technology and Artificial Intelligence systems in Nunavut is essential for fostering inclusive development and equitable access to digital opportunities. Nunavummiut experience various barriers, including challenges related to internet infrastructure, cultural and linguistic diversity, privacy concerns,

and educational gaps. Addressing these issues demands a comprehensive approach that integrates technological advancements with a deep respect for Inuit values and community needs.

- 1. Improving Internet Accessibility and Infrastructure:** Improving Internet accessibility in Nunavut demands a coordinated effort to enhance infrastructure, affordability, and technical support. Investing in robust internet infrastructure, particularly in remote areas, is crucial to providing reliable connectivity that can withstand environmental challenges. For example, financial assistance programs can be introduced to make internet services and devices more affordable for residents enduring economic barriers. Additionally, expanding local technical support services in English and Inuktitut will ensure residents have the assistance needed to effectively utilize and maintain their ICT resources.
- 2. Enhancing Cultural and Linguistic Accessibility:** To enhance cultural and linguistic accessibility, ICT tools must support Inuktitut language and syllabic writing systems. Collaborating with local communities is vital to developing inclusive technologies that reflect cultural sensitivities and preferences. AI systems should be designed with input from Inuit communities to address local perspectives and ensure relevance. By embedding cultural considerations into ICT development, Nunavut can promote greater acceptance and usability of digital technologies among its diverse population.
- 3. Strengthening Privacy and Security Measures:** Ensuring robust privacy and security measures is critical to building trust and safeguarding personal data. Nunavut-specific regulations should be established to protect sensitive information, with transparent policies on data collection and usage. Ethical surveillance mechanisms for AI development should be implemented to mitigate risks of bias and discrimination. Engaging local communities in discussions about privacy concerns and ethical guidelines could help tailor regulatory frameworks to

reflect Nunavut's values and priorities.

4. **Promoting Inclusive Technology and Education:** Promoting inclusive technology requires targeted educational initiatives and community engagement. Programs should focus on enhancing digital literacy skills and providing practical training on ICT usage. Public resources should be equipped with accessible technology and resources to support residents with diverse needs. By empowering Nunavummiut with the skills and resources to navigate digital platforms, Nunavut can bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technological opportunities.
5. **Supporting Hybrid Communication Methods:** Supporting hybrid communication methods that integrate traditional and modern platforms is essential for enhancing accessibility and engagement. Local radio and community-based social media groups are vital for information sharing and cultural preservation in Nunavut. These platforms should be strengthened to meet diverse communication needs. Service providers should diversify communication channels to offer alternatives such as text-based interactions, accommodating varying preferences and accessibility requirements within the community.

By implementing these recommendations, governments can overcome barriers to ICT and AI accessibility in Nunavut while honouring Inuit values and community priorities. Accessibility Standards Canada's commitment to inclusivity aligns with these goals, aiming to empower Nunavummiut and foster a digitally inclusive environment. Through collaborative efforts and targeted initiatives, Nunavut can harness technology's transformative potential to support community well-being, preserve cultural heritage, and drive sustainable development in the digital era.



Transportation

Accessibility Standards Canada's transportation standard focuses on several key areas where people with disabilities may experience barriers during their travel journey,

including; paths of travel from parking and drop-off zones to terminals, washrooms, emergency egress, luggage carousels, and security screenings.ⁱ Effective communication is crucial, including terminal and gate announcements, boarding information, in-service entertainment, and general communication with employees. Customer service and online services and technologies, such as websites, self-service counters, and check-in processes, are also essential focus areas. Additionally, the standard addresses the boarding process, including the handling of assistive devices, shuttles, and transfers, as well as services like service counters, food kiosks, and shops.

The Nunavut Transportation Strategy (GN, 2020)ⁱⁱ also identifies several barriers to transportation that impact accessible transportation in Nunavut. Geographical challenges, such as Nunavut's vast land area and remote location, present significant obstacles to developing transportation infrastructure that meets Canadian accessibility standards. The limited accessibility of transportation infrastructure in Nunavut, with less than 70,000 square kilometres within 100 kilometres of any transportation infrastructure and none accessible by road, hinders the territory from meeting the accessibility standards set in other parts of Canada (GN, 2020). Additionally, the high cost of transportation in Nunavut, where the Government of Nunavut spends over \$85 million per year on travel and transportation, creates affordability issues that affect the accessibility of amenities and

i Accessibility Standards Canada (n.d). Transportation. <https://accessible.canada.ca/centre-of-expertise/transportation#s7.1>

ii Government of Nunavut. (2020). Ingirrasiliqata (Let's get moving): Nunavut transportation strategy. https://lupit.nunavut.ca > dms > dms_download

“ We need transportation for disabled people to go to public places. Most of us don’t go around because there’s none available on transportation and we stay in the house.”

— Study participant

services compared to other Canadian jurisdictions. These barriers underscore the need for significant investment and strategic planning to improve transportation accessibility in Nunavut and bring it in line with the standards expected across Canada.

Initially established along coastlines, Arctic communities still rely predominantly on air transportation. In Nunavut, communities depend on air transport for essential supplies, as no highway network connects them. As such, transportation in Nunavut is central to accessibility, and it was the most discussed issue across all interviews and group discussions. Transportation was discussed in 81% of all conversation, and a majority of respondents cited transportation (or lack of transportation) as the most prominent issue when they defined accessible communities.

Findings were also consistent with Nunavut Tunngaviik Incorporated report on Nunavut’s Infrastructure (NTI, 2020)ⁱⁱⁱ which highlights the lack of sidewalks in Nunavut which poses a mobility barrier for people using wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Even paved areas present challenges as conventional wheelchairs are more likely to break and are costly to repair. This issue is exacerbated by Northern conditions where “*curb cuts*”

iii Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (2020, October 20). Nunavut’s Infrastructure Gap. https://www.tunngavik.com/files/2020/10/2020.10.20-Nunavuts_Infrastructure_Gap_Report_vf.pdf



Public Transportation?

Eeta finds it hard to get around her community. When she needs to go somewhere, she relies on her family or goes on the radio to ask for a ride.

This makes it hard for Eeta to get to work or appointments.

She wants her community to have accessible public transportation so she can have more independence.

“Too few community members with disabilities can fully participate in the community. No, I think the one(s) with disabilities don’t even go out (and) participate in anything.... The one with the wheel, the one on the wheelchairs, they have no transportation or, or the elders that can barely walk... we need an Elders’ bus.”

— Study participant

quickly fill with snow, ice, and gravel, making it difficult for individuals with mobility challenges. The report aligns with participants’ comments on air travel, as limited air infrastructure in Nunavut, including runways, does not accommodate wide-body jets, which results in days-long travel routes within the territory and for necessary medical or work travel outside (NTI, 2020). This lack of air infrastructure affects the daily lives of Nunavummiut, making travel more challenging and costly.

Transportation emerged as a significant theme in discussions among participants, including various aspects of mobility within and around the community. Participants highlighted challenges with accessible taxis and buses, often noting their limited availability or absence entirely. Issues related to navigating the community without transportation were also discussed, with barriers such as inadequate snow removal, gravel paths, and challenging terrain like hills impacting accessibility. Air travel was another area of concern, reflecting challenges in accessing reliable and affordable flights, which are crucial for connecting remote communities.

Participants expressed deep concerns regarding safety, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities. The discussion underscored worries about isolation stemming from limited transportation options, which hindered access to essential goods and services.

FIGURE 15 Public transportation?

Eeta is a representation of the experiences shared for this study. Follow her story.

Ensuring fair access to transportation emerged as a critical issue, reflecting broader community concerns about equity and inclusivity in Nunavut's transportation infrastructure. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize safety, accessibility, and the unique geographical and cultural context of Nunavut.

"We need public transportation especially for Elders to go to appointments and go in community. It is not normal for us to be locked up in houses and not be outside on the land or anywhere. We need more, we are suffering."

None of the communities in Nunavut have public transportation, and only a few have a taxi service available. Nunavummiut expressed a strong desire for accessible and affordable transportation that can facilitate access to community events and amenities. Specifically, there is a need for transportation options that are physically accessible for individuals with disabilities and wheelchair users, as well as economically feasible for all residents. Many respondents emphasized the importance of a reliable and affordable taxi service, especially if it is equipped to accommodate accessibility needs.

Transportation in Nunavut is central to accessibility, and it was the most discussed issue across all interviews and group discussions. Transportation was discussed in 81% of all conversations.

A significant number of participants voiced support for the introduction of a community vehicle in their respective communities. However, they also acknowledged several barriers hindering the improvement of community transportation services. These barriers include logistical challenges such as limited garage space, difficulties in obtaining replacement parts for vehicles, and the absence of local mechanics or maintenance personnel. Despite these challenges, communities expressed a collective desire to address these obstacles in order to enhance accessibility, safety, and connectivity for Nunavummiut while reducing social isolation. Addressing these transportation needs aligns with broader community goals of promoting inclusivity and improving quality of life across Nunavut.

No Transportation Means No Access

Many respondents mentioned a difficulty getting to medical appointments or retail outlets to purchase groceries and other necessities. Lack of transportation in the community led many participants to report missing medical appointments or being unable to access food or medications. Respondents also frequently reported missing flights due to a lack of transportation in the community, including a lack of taxi service or airport shuttle.

“Because it’s kind of hard to get transportation even if we got transportation. The Elders need more transportation, and if they have to go to health centre, they look for transportation. They need help. To make it easier for everyone, we need buses and taxis that are easy to get on and off, with no big steps. And it would be good if they run often and go to different places, so people can get around with[out] waiting too long. [...] And if there are drivers or staff, they should be friendly and patient, so everyone feels comfortable when they travel. It need to be simple and welcoming for everyone.”

People also reported on the challenges they experience in accessing public spaces and participating in community events due to a lack of accessible transportation. This limitation often means missing out on important activities happening within the community. Many respondents highlighted their concerns for the Elders in their community, noting that the absence of accessible, reliable, and affordable transportation isolates many Elders in their homes. As a result, they often rely on family and friends to deliver needed supplies and goods. Respondents expressed a strong desire to see more opportunities for elderly community members to engage in community gatherings and safely attend medical appointments. Nunavummiut emphasized the need for leadership to advocate for accessible transportation specifically tailored to the needs of Elders, underscoring the importance of enhancing mobility options to promote inclusivity and support the well-being of elderly residents.

“No, no. They need transportation [...] Too few community members with disabilities can fully participate in the community. No, I think the one with disabilities don’t

even go out participate in anything [...] The one with the [wheelchairs], they have no transportation, or the Elders that can barely walk.”

Many participants expressed frustration that community facilities and programs often go underutilized due to inadequate transportation options. For instance, one participant noted that the Elders’ centre in their community remains largely unused because Elders struggle to access it without suitable transportation. This issue underscores the broader impact of transportation barriers on mental health, with respondents highlighting concerns about increased isolation within their communities. There is a palpable fear among respondents that Elders are not receiving necessary support due to their inability to attend community events or access medical services.

Respondents strongly advocated for improved Elders’ services, stressing the critical need for accessible transportation that supports social outings, errands, and medical appointments. While some communities have a weekly car service specifically for Elders’ gatherings, it is limited to that purpose alone and does not extend to fulfilling individual needs such as medical appointments and errands. This situation reflects a significant gap in transportation services tailored to meet the diverse and essential mobility needs of Elders in Nunavut communities.

“Elders get isolated when they don’t have proper transportation to visit or go for health or services that they need. Yeah it’s [...] sometimes a barrier.”

Similarly, several respondents with disabilities emphasized the critical impact of inadequate transportation on their ability to access community facilities, events, and programs. They expressed frustration that despite the availability of services, the lack of accessible transportation rendered these opportunities effectively inaccessible. This situation contributes to feelings of exclusion, neglect, and being left behind among individuals with disabilities in Nunavut.

“I remember her mother posting how she really wish to see a vehicle that will take her child places where other peers her age go. For example, during summer, we go out to the [redacted]. There’s picnics and playgrounds down

there. You can walk or just be out there and enjoy. The mother wanted her daughter to go anyway to see what others are seeing, not just stay home and not just go outside the door. [...] But it will be so great if vehicles were provided for.”

When discussing community participation for people with disabilities, one participant stated, *“I would say they’re probably limited. I would say they’re limited and they’re probably stuck at home more often than they would like to be. Just because they don’t have an option.”* This statement underscores the significant challenges for individuals with disabilities in accessing community activities and services due to inadequate transportation options.

“Elders get isolated when they don’t have proper transportation to visit or go for health or services that they need.”

In one community, discussions centred around a new housing development underway. While many residents expressed excitement about the prospect of new housing units, concerns arose regarding the distance of these new units from essential amenities. Given that accessible units are typically incorporated into new builds, the distance from vital community services in areas lacking adequate transportation infrastructure raises apprehensions about how individuals with mobility barriers will effectively access community life. Similar concerns were expressed in other communities, where participants emphasized the necessity for accessible housing to be strategically located near amenities such as health centres to ensure equitable access for all residents.

“I think some units need to be near the health centre. If they don’t have any vehicles at home, unless if they can find a person who can help them drive to the facilities where they need help with.”

Respondents highlighted significant affordability issues in the few communities where an active taxi service exists. Taxis were described as expensive, posing financial barriers for individuals with limited incomes. One participant noted that affording a taxi

to and from work would require a second income. To address this issue, participants desired more taxi vouchers for programs and events, ensuring that transportation costs do not deter community members from participating, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Moreover, transportation limitations have profound implications for young people's educational opportunities. Specifically, one respondent emphasized that school buses are only available for elementary school students, leaving secondary school students to arrange their own transportation. This situation often results in missed school hours, hindering secondary students' access to education.

“students are missing out on a lot of their day because it takes them that much longer to get home at lunch and get back to school or get here on time or participate in afterschool programs because it would then be dark and they'd have to be walking home alone.”

How People Manage

Nunavummiut consistently emphasized their reliance on family members and other community members for assistance with transportation. Many participants mentioned relying heavily on friends and family, particularly for essential trips, highlighting that they frequently call on their social networks for necessary journeys. However, alongside this dependence, respondents expressed feelings of burden and shame regarding their repeated need to ask for help in navigating their communities. Further, the theme of self-advocacy among Nunavummiut with disabilities was a significant thread throughout the transportation data. Nunavummiut with disabilities described consistently being responsible for arranging their own transportation, without proactive involvement from service professionals or community leadership.

The challenges related to medical travel arrangements were also a prevalent concern. In communities where transportation options are limited, respondents often experience difficulties in scheduling and accessing medical appointments, leading to instances of missed or rescheduled care. They highlighted

their personal responsibility in managing their medical needs, including arranging emergency care when necessary. Many shared anecdotes of resourceful methods to reach medical centres, such as walking considerable distances following life-threatening medical emergencies.

“Many caregivers reported transporting people they care for and bringing them places around the community. This added responsibility can take a toll on the caregiver physically and mentally and take time away from their other responsibilities. With a lack of accessible infrastructure, this can include hauling heavy equipment and carrying other individuals around.”

“We’re usually the ones that kinda drive her around where she wants to go, either to church or to the stores or public events or wherever she wants to go. Um, we have a truck that’s kind of high. So we don’t, you know, it’s kinda hard for her to get on and then we have to make sure that we carry the walker on the back of the truck. Um, also now there it’s hard for me to lift up that walker sometimes.”

“He never goes out, but someday he will need to. And we used our own truck. Our own ramp, homemade ramp.”

Nunavummiut also described using the local radio to request a ride or soliciting family and friends.

“I do have a concern that some people don’t have transportation to go where they want to go. Yeah, especially winter time. Yeah. So they go on local radios looking for somebody to bring them here and there.”

Respondents often rely on requesting rides from local service providers with vehicle access. Depending on the community, these providers may include the RCMP, staff from the Northern Store or Co-op, or personnel from the Health Centre. While these service providers help to address some transportation needs, they often operate with limited resources and sometimes take risks with insurance coverage. In some communities, the local Northern Store or Co-op goes further by delivering groceries to individuals who cannot leave their homes. However, according to

information shared with our research team by a store employee, these deliveries may involve bending company policies, potentially exposing the providers to consequences in case of accidents.

“It’s not Hamlet’s, housing and health centre’s job to pick up and drop off the patients to the airport. But because there isn’t any taxi service, sometimes they get lucky, if he doesn’t get [lucky], he’ll try another organization, see if he can get a ride.”

Nunavummiut expressed concerns about obstacles to accessing healthcare services due to inadequate transportation options. These challenges extend to accessing health centres, airports for medical travel, and pharmacies within their communities. For example, the following quote illustrates a critical aspect of healthcare accessibility in Nunavut, highlighting the significant role these services play in bridging the gap for community members who lack personal transportation options.

“They’re the ones who sometimes deliver. It depends how busy they are, but if they’re not, they have time to quickly drop those off. But if they’re not, but because a lot of people doesn’t have any transportation, so it’s hard for them to send them to pick up their medication.”

The occasional flexibility of a pharmacy to deliver medications, depending on their workload, directly impacts individuals’ ability to access essential healthcare resources. The quote also points to a broader systemic issue of healthcare delivery in remote and northern communities. It underscores how geographic isolation and limited infrastructure hinder access to health centres and medical travel and complicate the everyday logistics of obtaining medications. The reliance on pharmacy delivery services reflects a practical solution to these challenges. However, it also reveals vulnerabilities in service consistency and reliability as the availability of medication delivery may fluctuate based on the pharmacy’s capacity, potentially affecting the timely receipt of medications for those in need.

Despite the challenges posed by inadequate medical transport infrastructure, some Hamlets have devised solutions to ensure residents can access necessary medical care. However, issues

related to insurance liabilities have resulted in inconsistent access to emergency and routine medical services in specific communities. The following participant quotes reveal a complex landscape where community-driven initiatives coexist with systemic barriers to healthcare access. While proactive measures by hamlets demonstrate resilience and local support networks, the reliance on ad hoc solutions underscores the urgent need for sustainable, systematic improvements in service provision across Nunavut.

“I know that [...] as a Hamlet we’re trying to bridge the gap [...] I’ve noticed a few people who do have disabilities and we’re aware because even working at this hamlet right across the street, we see the health centre. So what we do is we take it upon ourselves, you know, when the health centre informs us that they have a patient, the SAO and I, since I’ve been here, he’s doing it before by himself but the SAO and I will go and we will personally pick them up in our Hamlet vehicle. [...] We’re literally picking people up, the individual up on a stretcher to get in and out.”

“What about response time when you call the ambulance or you call the health centre? We call them on their phone. And they said, oh, you, you gotta find your own ride to go down. It’s hard to find transportation. You have to find people like neighbours, ask people to take us to the health centre. Or even hm - and the health centre, say call the RCMP. No choice cause Hamlet was saying they got no insurance to pick up people, they only got insurance for people from medivacs, that’s what they were saying.”

Respondents who are physically able and financially capable may opt to use four-wheelers for transportation. However, harsh weather conditions and high equipment and fuel costs make this option unfeasible for many. For instance, the expense of purchasing an ATV as a more affordable alternative to a car places it out of reach for most individuals. Those who rely on borrowed ATVs or snowmobiles often find them uncomfortable and unsafe, particularly for individuals living with disabilities who require stable and secure transportation for their essential assistive devices. The lack of safe storage options for these

devices adds to the challenges experienced.

Several respondents cited walking as a preferred mode of transportation, but only for those physically capable of doing so. However, the speed of walking can be a barrier in communities designed primarily for vehicular traffic, where fast-moving vehicles pose dangers, due to a lack of sidewalks. Wheelchairs and walkers encounter significant challenges on hilly gravel terrain and in snow or icy conditions, where roads often become slippery and unsafe. Participants strongly advocated for improved pedestrian infrastructure to enhance road safety and accessibility.

“It’s hard to find transportation. You have to find people like neighbours, ask people to take us to the health centre.”

Public transportation emerged as a widely supported solution among participants to mitigate transportation barriers. They emphasized the need for safe and accessible public transit systems staffed by well-trained drivers. Despite the community’s efforts to find makeshift solutions, persistent gaps in transportation infrastructure continue to disproportionately affect individuals with disabilities and Elders, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive and sustainable transportation solutions in these remote communities.

Air Travel

Air travel in Nunavut is fraught with accessibility challenges, making it an uncomfortable and often unsafe experience for many respondents. The inaccessibility begins with transportation to the airport, with numerous stories recounting how Nunavummiut walk to the airport, rely on rides from the RCMP, or even use the radio to solicit transportation. Upon arrival at the airport, passengers encounter numerous additional barriers. Security clearances are particularly stressful, especially for those with mobility aids. The standard security procedures can be cumbersome and intimidating, often exacerbating the sense of unease and discomfort. Respondents recommended the establishment of a separate security lane or room specifically for

individuals with disabilities to alleviate this stress and ensure a smoother, more dignified screening process. For instance, one respondent who is visually impaired recounted an especially distressing experience at the airport. Upon arriving, she struggled to find her ticket, which she had tucked into a bag. Instead of offering assistance, airport staff ridiculed her for not having her ticket readily available and asked her to move out of the line. The situation escalated when the agents refused to issue her a new ticket, causing her to miss her flight. This incident not only highlights the lack of empathy and support from airport staff but also underscores the broader issues of poor accessibility and inadequate training for supporting travellers with disabilities.

Overall, air travel experience in Nunavut highlights significant gaps in accessibility, from ground transportation to security procedures. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the travel experience and ensuring that all Nunavummiut can access air travel safely and comfortably.

“when I first started going traveling for medical, when I first started setting off alarms, I used to cry ‘cause. ... I didn’t understand all these security rules.”

In the absence of skywalks, passengers must walk out onto the tarmac and go up narrow stairs. Individuals with mobility disabilities are often put into Washington Chairs. Lack of knowledge about how to safely load these chairs have caused injuries and embarrassment. While waiting on the tarmac, disabled Nunavummiut and Elders have stated that they struggle to keep warm. Experiences with staff members at airports were mixed, and some respondents stated that they wish there was more training on how to assist individuals with disabilities, especially those with mobility disabilities.

“The airport was not designed with disability in mind, and I can tell. And not only that, but the service provided they are not properly trained for disabled people because I have been treated horribly by the staff there. I’ve had both wonderful experiences with some of the staff and downright horrible experiences with some of the staff, and there almost seems to be no in between. I was, there was one time where the staff were taking me down the

ramp because I can't walk the length of the airport so wheelchair when I'm there. And they were taking me down the outside ramp and I, obviously I'm overweight. And so that became a problem. And so they were kind of dragging me down and I kept like, it kept going like where I would speed down and hit the side of the ramp."

On the planes, participants reported that there were no designated seats for people with disabilities. Narrow lanes and rows make it so that getting into one's seat can be a challenge. One respondent recommended adding headphones as an option for hearing impaired people on the plane while they are doing safety announcements.

The high cost of air travel is a major barrier to travel outside of one's community. Recreational travel and visiting loved ones are not a financial possibility for many Nunavummiut. With the limited competition in the territory, many Nunavummiut believe that the airlines are price-gouging. Elders spoke about the cultural importance of travel as nomadic people. There are some worries about the increasing separation between the three regions, as few can afford inter-territorial travel.

"It's funny because they're making a profit based on a Inuit practice of, of travel between communities right, now? It's become, like, profitable. And, you know, Inuit no longer able to, to travel because they were forced into settlements. But now organizations are selling you back what was already ours."

Loved ones in other communities are often contacted via technology rather than in-person visits. Despite the flight subsidy for Nunavut Beneficiaries, the price is still inaccessible to many. Price inaccessibility has many Nunavummiut wishing airlines would, *"lower the fares a little bit so that family can get to family, [for] family functions like funerals and birthday."*

Communication surrounding travel is a significant source of stress for many individuals. Breakdowns in communication can occur regarding flight changes and rescheduling. Respondents shared instances where they were notified about their travel only hours before their departure. One individual recounted, *"when they have a waitlist [...] and they don't give us time [...] you*

have to leave in 2 hours.” The bureaucratic nature of the travel system often renders it inaccessible due to the high potential for miscommunication.

Medical Travel

Many participants highlighted the stark contrast in accessibility encountered by disabled individuals. Unlike non-disabled travellers who may experience inconveniences, individuals with disabilities often encounter systemic barriers that complicate their journey.

“But being disabled, having to go through that medical travel system is another story...It’s harder than, like, normal people traveling through there...I have to, like, organize everything else on top of what they’re trying to give us. Because we’re given the last resort of everything.”

The territorial government generally covers medical travel, but transportation to the airport is not always included in this coverage. While taxi vouchers are intended to be part of the travel package, some respondents reported not receiving them (or reported no taxi available in their community), forcing them to bear this additional cost. Additionally, medical travel can result in unforeseen expenses. For instance, one respondent shared a story of spending their money to stay in Ottawa for an extra week due to a communication breakdown between health service providers. Transportation issues frequently lead to missed flights because individuals cannot secure a ride to the airport. Some participants noted that they forgo medical attention altogether because they lack the means to get to the medical centre and airport or simply do not want to deal with the hassle of medical travel. Many noted that an accessible airport shuttle would alleviate many barriers to getting to the airport.

Although medical travel is not directly under the purview of ASC, many areas of overlap exist where federal transportation standards can significantly impact the experience of individuals requiring medical travel. ASC mandates that transportation services under federal jurisdiction, including air travel and interprovincial transportation, adhere to accessibility standards.

While the Accessible Canada Act does not specifically cover local transportation to airports or the accessibility of medical boarding homes, the principles it enshrines can guide improvements in these areas. For instance, implementing accessible airport shuttles aligns with the Act's goal of ensuring accessible transportation options for all Canadians. Further, ensuring that medical boarding homes and hotels meet accessibility standards can be influenced by the federal guidelines, promoting a more consistent and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities during medical travel. By leveraging federal standards, the gaps in the medical travel process can be addressed more comprehensively, ultimately improving the overall accessibility and quality of services for Nunavummiut.

"The drivers refuse to take me...they're like, "no, you're in a wheelchair. You have to take a wheelchair taxi...So that's another one hour wait, after after our eight-hour trip. That's another one hour wait of taxi. And another 45 minutes, approximately 45 minutes from [medical boarding home]. From the airport to the [boarding home]. That's like 10 hours transfer, transporting there."

Medical Escorts

There is a general lack of transparency in how the travel system operates, including the approval of medical escorts. For example, one respondent expressed frustration, saying, *"I'm hearing so many different things ... are escorts allowed or not?"* This lack of clarity leads to confusion and stress, with many individuals missing their flights because they were not properly informed.

"But as the days are getting closer, that's when we finally do a follow up... they haven't received the itineraries until... we only have less than an hour before we can catch the flights."

"I was supposed to have an escort. Cause they had to freeze my eye I couldn't see for three or four hours. And I got there, the doctor asked me where my escort is? ... Because my escort got denied here."

Respondents reported on the importance of escorts during

medical travel. This included positive experiences of having an escort with them and negative experiences of being denied an escort. There was much confusion around medical escort policies and inconsistency in receiving approval to bring an escort. Monolingual Inuktitut speakers, Elders, and individuals with disabilities all expressed confusion with the different rules regarding escorts.

It is expensive to transport family back and forth. Sometimes, even if they don't necessarily qualify for medical travel, family members will "informally escort" them. For example, one participant reports bringing his brother from down south, where he stays in a facility, and when he visits, the participant goes to pick him up. The overnight trip alone can be \$2,000.

Respondent: *"For example, if I try to bring my brother from Ottawa to (community redacted), I have to stop in Iqaluit for overnight and overnight I can spend almost \$2,000 just for-*"

Researcher: *"Just to eat and have a room."*

Respondent *"Hotel and Meal."*

Researcher: *"Yeah. Taxis."*

Respondent: *"Wheelchair. you name it. That's how expensive it is trying to, that's where we don't visit our brother. We can only communicate now."*

IQ Values and Transportation

Transportation is not merely about physical movement but deeply intertwined with community well-being, independence, and cultural practices. Firstly, Inuit societal values emphasize interconnectedness and communal support, which is evident in how Nunavummiut rely on family, friends, and community members for transportation. This reliance reflects the value placed on mutual aid and solidarity, where community members assist those with mobility challenges or limited access to transportation options. This aligns with IQ principles of cooperation and sharing resources to ensure collective welfare,

illustrating how transportation barriers are mitigated through communal efforts despite systemic challenges. Also, the lack of accessible transportation infringes upon Inuit principles of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The current transportation limitations undermine these values by restricting individuals' access to essential services like healthcare and community activities. This restriction not only affects physical mobility but also impacts mental well-being and community cohesion, as Elders and community members with disabilities are often isolated due to inaccessible travel options.

The cultural significance of travel for Inuit communities further emphasizes the importance of accessible transportation. Historically, mobility has been integral to Inuit lifestyles, facilitating hunting, trading, and social gatherings. Today, inadequate transportation infrastructure limits these activities, hindering cultural practices and the ability to maintain community connections. This challenges preserving cultural knowledge and practices passed down through generations, highlighting the broader impacts of transportation barriers on cultural continuity. In addressing these challenges, incorporating IQ values into transportation planning becomes crucial. Respect for Elders, for instance, necessitates accessible transportation options that enable them to participate in community gatherings and access services without barriers. Similarly, ensuring accessibility aligns with IQ principles of adapting to environmental conditions, such as maintaining safe travel routes in snow and ice-covered terrain, essential in Nunavut's harsh climate.

Ultimately, enhancing transportation accessibility in Nunavut must integrate Inuit societal values and IQ principles to foster inclusive communities where all members can participate fully. This approach addresses immediate mobility challenges and strengthens cultural resilience and community well-being in the face of ongoing infrastructure disparities.

Recommendations

Transportation in Nunavut presents significant challenges, particularly for individuals with disabilities and Elders, impacting their access to essential services, medical care, and community participation. The current infrastructure inadequacies exacerbate

isolation and limit economic opportunities, reflecting broader systemic issues that require urgent attention.

- 1. Paths of Travel and Communication: Improving pathways from parking and drop-off zones to terminals, washrooms, and other amenities is crucial. Clearing snow and maintaining accessible pathways year-round, including properly maintaining curb cuts and paved areas, should be prioritized. Enhanced communication methods, especially in Inuktitut, are essential for ensuring information accessibility across all stages of travel.**
- 2. Customer Service and Online Services: Implementing comprehensive training for transportation staff on disability awareness and inclusive service delivery is critical. This includes sensitivity training to enhance interactions with passengers requiring assistance and ensure online platforms are accessible for booking and check-in processes. Additional training on cultural norms is also needed.**
- 3. Boarding Processes and Assistive Devices: Streamlining the boarding process with designated assistance areas and trained personnel for handling assistive devices is necessary. Implementing accessible shuttles and transfer services between terminals and aircrafts, along with accessible service counters and amenities, is vital for enhancing the overall travel experience.**
- 4. Community Transportation and Accessibility: Developing accessible community transportation solutions, including accessible taxis and buses, is imperative for addressing local mobility barriers. Prioritizing snow removal, road maintenance, and infrastructure improvements like sidewalk installations in communities are essential for all residents.**
- 5. Fund and Support Public Transportation in Each Community in Nunavut: Allocating funds and resources to establish and sustain public transportation systems within each community in Nunavut is essential. This includes supporting the development of routes that serve residential areas and key facilities, ensuring equitable access to transportation services for all residents, including those with disabilities.**

6. **Attract More Airlines to Come to Nunavut to Increase Price Competition:** Encouraging more airlines to operate in Nunavut fosters competition, potentially lowering airfare costs and increasing flight options. This strategy enhances affordability and accessibility for residents needing to travel for medical, educational, or personal reasons, reducing reliance on limited carrier options.
7. **Expand Community Transportation Options:** Encourage partnerships with local Hamlets or for-profit companies to enhance transportation services in each community across Nunavut. By incentivizing taxi services and other transport providers to operate locally, we can bridge accessibility gaps and improve mobility for residents, especially those with mobility challenges or lacking personal vehicles.
8. **Mandate All Airports and Airplanes to Have Accessible Washrooms and Seating:** Enforcing accessibility standards for washrooms and seating on all airplanes and within airport facilities ensures dignified and comfortable travel experiences for passengers with disabilities. Compliance with these mandates promotes inclusivity and enhances the overall travel experience for all passengers.

Addressing transportation barriers in Nunavut requires a multifaceted approach involving infrastructure improvements, comprehensive training for service providers, and community-driven solutions. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity in transportation planning and implementation, we can significantly enhance the quality of life for Nunavummiut, ensuring equitable access to essential services, healthcare, and community engagement opportunities.

Conclusion

This study provides a profound understanding of the challenges experienced by individuals with disabilities in the circumpolar North.

Through a comprehensive exploration of Nunavummiut's lived experiences and perspectives, this research sheds light on the unique barriers to inclusion and accessibility in remote Arctic communities in Nunavut. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of incorporating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit values, respecting cultural nuances in communication, and engaging diverse stakeholders in the development of accessibility standards to create a future that is accessible and inclusive for all individuals in Nunavut.

The findings underscore the importance of community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and infrastructure development in fostering a more inclusive society for Nunavummiut with disabilities. One of the critical contributions of this study is the emphasis on the intersectionality of disability with other aspects of identity, such as culture, geography, and socio-economic factors. By centring the perspectives of Nunavummiut with disabilities, the research highlights the need for tailored solutions that address the challenges Nunavummiut encounter. Incorporating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values underscores the significance of cultural knowledge and traditional practices in shaping inclusive policies and practices. Moreover, the study highlights the critical role of infrastructure development in enhancing accessibility and quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Nunavut. Recommendations for improved internet access, all-weather roads, and accessible built environments reflect the interconnected nature of physical, social, and economic barriers to inclusion. By addressing these structural challenges, policymakers and stakeholders can create environments that support the full participation and empowerment of individuals with disabilities.

Inspired by the insights from Nunavut Tunngavik's report on Nunavut's Infrastructure Gap (NTI, 2020), our ultimate goal is for Nunavut to adopt local accessibility legislation to cater specifically to Nunavut, as targeted legislation can address socioeconomic disparities by promoting employment opportunities and economic participation for individuals with disabilities. By mandating accessible workplaces, education facilities, and healthcare services, the legislation can help reduce barriers for Nunavummiut with disabilities and improve overall quality of life. Provinces like Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia have standalone legislation tailored to address the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, whereas Nunavut lacks such comprehensive measures. This disparity poses challenges in setting consistent accessibility standards and implementing them across sectors, potentially limiting the accessibility improvements needed to create an inclusive environment in Nunavut.

NDMS seeks to address these barriers and advocate for policies that enhance accessibility and support for individuals with disabilities in Nunavut. By aligning with recommendations from the NTI (2020) report and advocating for inclusive legislation at territorial and federal levels, NDMS aims to create a more accessible and equitable environment where all Nunavummiut can thrive.

As we close, we are honored to share a poem contributed by a member of our advisory committee. The anonymous author generously shared a piece of her own profound journey.

**In a space where the earth whispers secrets
beneath the snow,**

**where the light dances in a language that
only I can understand,**

**I find my voice, it whispers across the space
that keeps me bound,**

**My hands, brittle and broken, still craft
stories from the sinews of the land,**

They hold stories untold, of a life that breathes with the wind

The poem evokes a profound connection to the natural world and personal empowerment through its rich imagery, which is highly relevant to discussions on disability and accessibility. The opening lines, where ‘the earth whispers secrets beneath the snow’ and ‘the light dances in a language that only I can understand,’ paint a picture of the natural world’s beauty, suggesting a deep communion with nature. This portrayal of nature as a source of solace and understanding, more readily accessible than built environments for individuals with disabilities, inspires us to consider how natural spaces can be more inclusively designed and integrated into accessibility frameworks.

Central to the poem is the discovery of voice and agency amidst physical limitations, depicted through the narrator’s ‘brittle and broken hands’ crafting stories from the land’s sinews. This underscores the importance of accessible communication tools and platforms that empower individuals with disabilities to express themselves fully. Further, the act of storytelling represents resilience and cultural expression, highlighting the significance of preserving and making accessible diverse narratives within disability communities. This emphasis on diverse narratives makes everyone feel valued and included.

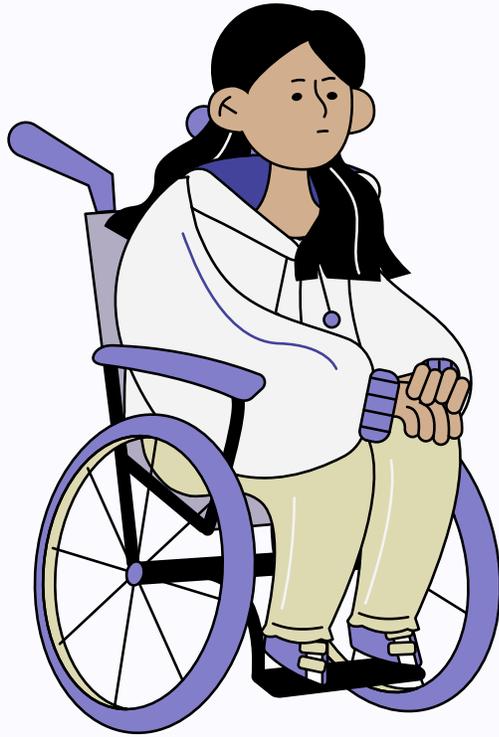
The poem also addresses barriers and boundaries, metaphorically expressed as the “space that keeps me bound.” This resonates with the physical and social barriers that people with disabilities often encounter, from inaccessible physical environments to societal attitudes that restrict participation. It prompts critical reflection on dismantling these barriers through inclusive design, policies prioritizing accessibility, and fostering environments that support the full inclusion and empowerment of individuals with disabilities.

Overall, the poem offers a poignant exploration of themes such as connection to nature, personal empowerment through adversity, cultural resilience, and the ongoing challenges of accessibility. It invites deeper conversations on how these themes intersect with broader efforts towards inclusivity and

equity for Nunavummiut with disabilities, urging creative and inclusive solutions that honour diverse experiences and enable full participation in society.

In conclusion, this study not only provides valuable insights into the experiences of individuals with disabilities in Nunavut but also offers a roadmap for creating a more inclusive and equitable society. By amplifying the perspectives of Nunavummiut, integrating cultural values, and advocating for systemic change, we can work towards a future where all residents, regardless of ability, can thrive and contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Nunavut's communities.

We have included additional articles detailing Nunavummiut's experiences with accessibility in Appendix C for further reference and insight into the challenges and perspectives discussed.



Meet Eeta!

Eeta is a 26-year-old Inuk woman from a small community.

She sometimes uses a wheelchair or cane because she injured her back and hip in an accident.



Eeta's Employment

Eeta works at the Northern Store.

Her coworkers keep the ramp clear of snow and ice for her, and she has a large desk that fits her wheelchair.

Eeta takes sick days when she is in too much pain. Her manager understands that this is an accommodation.

Eeta likes her job and wishes her manager would talk with her about a promotion.

Her Built Environment

Eeta shares her home with 8 family members. They take care of each other, but sometimes Eeta wishes for more personal space and privacy.

Eeta and her family are on the waiting list for a new housing development in their community. They requested a unit with a ramp and wide doorways so Eeta can use her wheelchair inside.

They've also asked for safety bars in the washroom and a walk-in shower to help keep Eeta's grandmother safe from slips and falls.

Eeta would like more accessible housing units in her community.



Communicating in English

Eeta interprets in Inuktitut when her grandmother has medical appointments. She helps her grandmother understand the medical words and important information – it's not always easy, but she does her best.

Eeta also helps her grandmother find online information about her benefits, taxes, or banking. It can be hard to navigate websites and find the right information.

Sometimes they get frustrated, especially if the internet connection is bad. They turn off the computer and decide to try again another day.

Procurement

Eeta's family is eagerly awaiting more details about the new housing development. Her father and mother attend a town hall meeting to learn more.

Some community members are frustrated with the planning process. They are feeling excluded from the decision-making around this big government-funded project.

Community Programs and Services

Eeta loves to sew. She just finished making a new amauti and is really proud of her work.

She would love to learn from an Elder about traditional sewing, but doesn't know who to ask.

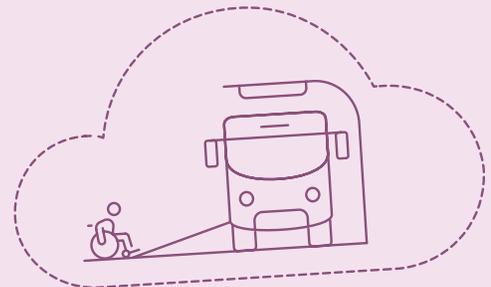
Eeta wishes there were more opportunities for everyone in the community to explore and learn traditional skills.

Using Information and Communication Technology

Eeta enjoys using Facebook to stay connected with her friends.

However, the internet connection in Eeta's home can be unreliable, and the cost is very high. Eeta's family spends \$200 a month, and always runs out of data before the month is done.

She's thought about maybe taking a course online, or looking for a new remote job — but not without a better internet connection.



Public Transportation?

Eeta finds it hard to get around her community. When she needs to go somewhere, she relies on her family or goes on the radio to ask for a ride.

This makes it hard for Eeta to get to work or appointments.

She wants her community to have accessible public transportation so she can have more independence.

When am I traveling?

I sometimes need to see medical specialists for help with my physical barriers. Because specialists don't usually visit my community, I often travel for medical appointments.

When I need to see a doctor, the office of Medical Travel will call me to let me know when my appointment will be, and what my travel arrangements are. Waiting to learn about my travel arrangements causes me anxiety. I don't know when I will need to leave, or how much notice I will get. One time, Medical Travel told me that I would be traveling that same day.



Was my travel escort approved?

I feel more calm when my mother can travel with me as my escort. My mother can also advocate for me during the travel journey, and help me understand everything happening during my medical appointments. If I am feeling overwhelmed or am in pain, it can be hard for me to remember everything the doctors tell me. I had a surgery not too long ago and I couldn't imagine going through it without my mother with me.

I know that having an escort travel with me is what is best for me, but my most recent request for an escort was denied. The health center feels that I can manage the travel on my own. I disagree, but I'm not sure who to talk to about appealing the decision.



Eeta's home

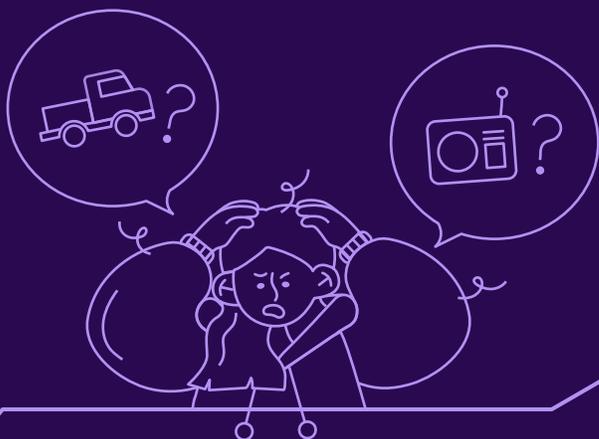


Eeta's Travel Journey

Meet Eeta!

I'm Eeta. I'm a 26-years-old Inuk woman. I live in a small community of 1,300 people. When I was young, I had an accident that injured my back and hip. Now I experience pain in my daily life. Sometimes I use a wheelchair or cane.

I travel to Iqaluit and Ottawa for medical visits to get help with my pain and injuries from my accident. Travel is stressful for me. I prefer to travel with my mother as my escort. She helps me and is good company.



How will I get to the airport?

Getting to the airport is always difficult. My community doesn't have a taxi, and my family doesn't have a working vehicle right now. When I go for medical travel, I always have a hard time finding a ride. The airport is a 15 minute drive from my home. I will usually go on Facebook to see if someone can drive me. I've also gone on the radio too. One time, when I was really worried about missing my flight, I called the RCMP and they gave me a ride in their truck. Every time I have to go for medical travel, I worry that I might miss my flight.

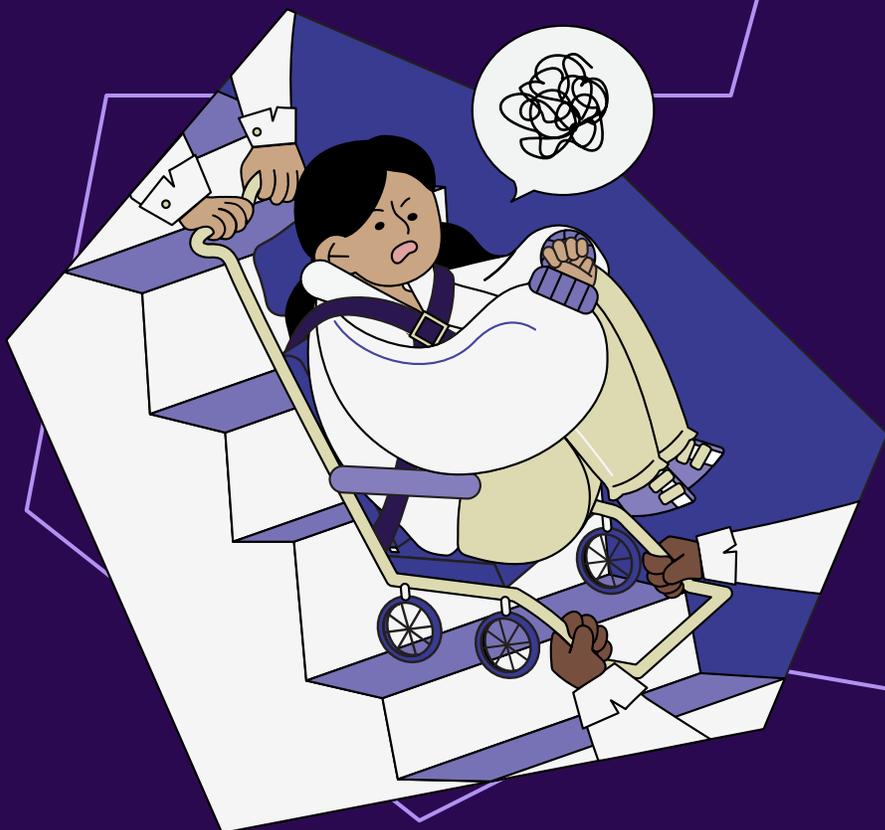
Airport



Accessibility and assistance aren't always easy

The airport in my community is small. I ask for help getting into the airport if the ramp is covered in snow. I am an ambulatory wheelchair user. This means that I can walk but sometimes I need to use a wheelchair because it's too tiring or painful. I can usually climb the stairs, as long as someone can help me with my luggage and wheelchair. On days when I am unable to walk, I have to call the airport in advance to make sure that they clear the ramp for me so I can use my wheelchair to get into the airport.

The plane arrives. It's very difficult for me to climb the steep narrow stairs into the airplane, so I ask them to use the Washington chair to help me get into the plane. I am secured into the narrow chair with a seat belt and lifted into the plane by two airport employees. I find the Washington chair very frightening; it doesn't feel safe.





Hotel

Boarding Home

Iqaluit

No accessible transportation...

I arrive in Iqaluit. there is limited accessible transportation in the capital, so I have to ask for help to get to my hotel. I flag a taxi and ask the driver to assist me in getting out of my wheelchair and into the cab. I then instruct the driver on how to fold down my wheelchair so it will fit into the trunk. I am already exhausted from my journey.



“Travel is so stressful and expensive. I know it can be improved.”



Where am I staying? Is it accessible?

When I arrive at the boarding house, there has been a mix up. They do not have a room available for me. I call Medical Travel and they book me a room at a hotel. However, the hotel is not accessible. I will need to leave my wheelchair on the main floor and take the stairs to get to my room.

When I am finally in my room, I'm exhausted, in pain from the physical exertion, and feeling lonely. The small hotel doesn't offer dinner service, but I am too tired to leave the hotel in search of a meal. I decide to go to sleep instead.

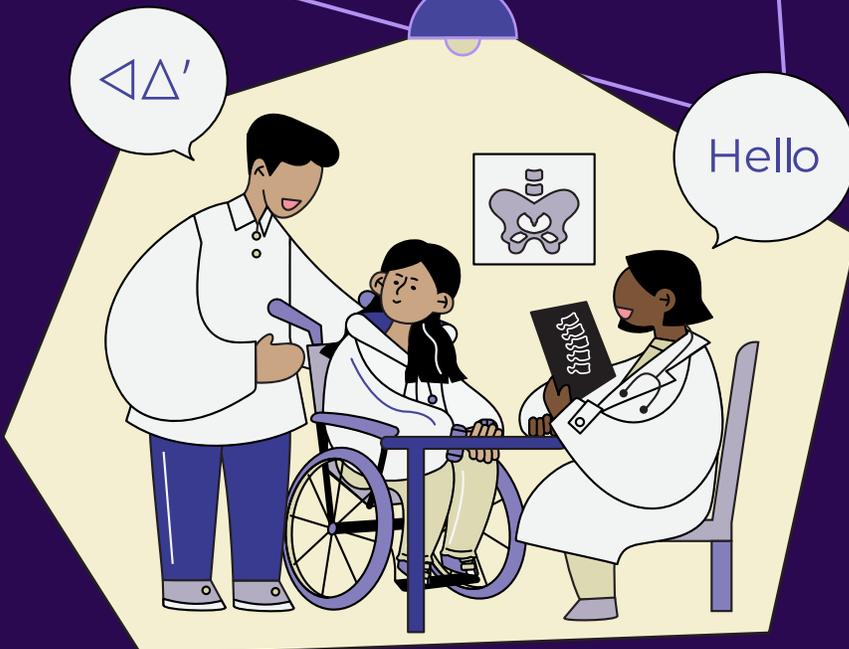
At the hospital

It is the day of my appointment. I wake up very hungry, because I skipped dinner last night so I could rest. I decide to try and find something to eat at the hospital, so I only have to make one trip. After going downstairs and finding my wheelchair, I ask the front desk staff to call me a taxi.

At the hospital I see my doctor. I prefer the hospital in Iqaluit because I can ask for an interpreter, which helps me feel more comfortable. Ottawa is easier to navigate with my wheelchair, but I sometimes feel out of place when I'm down south.

With my appointment finished, I'm looking forward to going home. I go back to my hotel to wait for my flight. I watch the weather closely while I wait. A sudden storm could keep me stranded in Iqaluit for days, so I hope it stays clear. I'm feeling lonely and miss my family.

Hospital



Getting home

I'm at the airport in Iqaluit waiting for my flight home. I ask the airport staff for help getting onto the plane. The airport does not have a skywalk, so two staff accompany me out onto the tarmac, one pushing me in my wheelchair. The two staff members chat with each other but don't acknowledge me. I feel invisible.

As the staff members push my wheelchair down the ramp it slips and I bump into the metal railing — ouch! The staff apologize to me. My arm is bruised and tender. It's very cold, minus 30 degrees. I wait on the tarmac for 20 minutes in the cold while the staff get the Washington chair ready.

Finally I'm on the plane and on my way home. I'm tired, sore, and very excited to be back home with my family.

Eeta's home



Appendices

Appendix A: IQ Values

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles, or societal values, reflect the Inuit way of knowing and encompass core values, beliefs, and practices.ⁱ Inuit Quajimajatuqangit is deeply rooted in Inuit culture and has been passed down through generations. Many departments of the Government of Nunavut, including the Department of Culture and Heritage, outline how these principles can be integrated into the design and delivery of programs and services.^{ii iii}

The IQ principles are as follows^{iv}:

Pijitsirniq (Service and providing for family and/or community): The concept of serving and providing for the family and/or community. This principle emphasizes the importance of contributing to the well-being of others and the community.

Aajiiqatigiinni (Discussion and Consensus Decision Making): The practice of making decisions through discussion and consensus. This involves listening to all contributions and reaching a decision that is acceptable to everyone involved.

-
- i Levesque, F. (2002). “La culture inuit n’est pas une cérémonie de thé japonaise” : historique et enjeux de l’Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (“les connaissances déjà acquises”) au Nunavut [Dissertation].
 - ii Rahm, J., Tagalik, S., Tester, F. J., Karetak, J., Ego, C., & Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. (2024). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit : ce que les Inuits savent depuis toujours. Presses de l’Université du Québec.
 - iii Department of Culture and Heritage, Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit Katimajit and Tuttarviit. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/inuit-qaujimajatuqangit-katimajit-and-tuttarviit>
 - iv Department of Culture and Heritage, Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). Inuit Societal Values. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/inuit-societal-values>

Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq (Skills and Knowledge Acquisition through observation, mentoring, practice and effort): The process of acquiring skills and knowledge through observation, practice, and effort. This principle values lifelong learning and the development of individual capabilities.

Qanuqtuurniq (Resourcefulness and Innovative Problem Solving): The ability to be innovative and use creative problem-solving techniques. This principle emphasizes adaptability and resourcefulness in overcoming challenges.

Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (Respect and care for the land, animals and the Environment): The practice of respecting and caring for the land, animals, and environment. This principle underlines the importance of sustainable living and maintaining a balance with nature.

Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq (Collaboration and Working Together for a Common Cause): The value of working together for a common cause. This principle highlights the importance of teamwork and mutual support within the community.

Inuuqatigiitsiarniq (Respecting Others, Relationships and Caring for People): The practice of fostering good relationships and treating others with respect and kindness. This principle is about maintaining harmony and positive interactions within the community.

Tunnganarniq (Fostering Good Spirit by Being Open, Welcoming and Inclusive): The practice of being open, welcoming, and inclusive. This principle encourages positive attitudes and behaviors that foster a welcoming and supportive environment.

These principles are integral to Inuit culture and are applied in various aspects of life, including community governance, education, and social interactions. They reflect a holistic approach to living that values the interconnectedness of people, community, and the environment.

Appendix B: Accessibility Standards

Accessibility Standards Canada is a federal initiative established under the Accessible Canada Act, which aims to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040.ⁱ The organization's primary focus is to develop and enforce accessibility standards that improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, ensuring equal access and opportunities in all aspects of society.ⁱⁱ

Mandate: The mandate of Accessibility Standards Canada is toⁱⁱⁱ:

1. Develop Accessibility Standards;
2. Advance Accessibility Research; and
3. Share information related to accessibility.

Key Areas of Focus: Accessibility Standards Canada concentrates on the following 7 key priorities to ensure comprehensive accessibility:^{iv}

1. Employment: Ensuring workplaces are inclusive and accommodating for individuals with disabilities.
2. Built Environment: Creating physical spaces that are accessible to all, including public buildings, transportation, and housing.
3. Information and Communication Technologies: Improving access to information and communication technologies, ensuring they are usable by everyone.

i Canada Accessibility Standards Canada. (2021). Roadmap to 2040 : a plan to guide the work of Accessibility Standards Canada. Accessibility Standards Canada = Normes d'accessibilité Canada. https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly_acquisitions_list-ef/2022/22-06/publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/nac-asc/AS4-25-2021-eng.pdf

ii Canada Employment and Social Development Canada, & Canada Accessibility Standards Canada. (2021). Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations: sample accessibility plan template. Employment and Social Development Canada = Emploi et Développement social Canada. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/redirect?app=dampub&id=b18eaae8-5fb9-4841-baca-0a9b5fff1658>

iii About Us. About us - Accessibility Standards Canada. (2023, August 10). <https://accessible.canada.ca/about-us#s1>

iv Creating accessibility standards. Creating accessibility standards - Accessibility Standards Canada. (2024, June 5). <https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards#s1>

4. Communication (other than Information and Communication Technologies)
5. Procurement of goods, services and facilities: Establishing accessibility requirements in goods and services procured by public and private sectors.
6. Design and delivery of programs and services: Enhancing the accessibility of services provided to the public, including customer service and healthcare.
7. Transportation: Ensuring all modes of transportation are accessible, from public transit to air travel.

Accessibility Standards Canada is a pivotal organization in the journey towards a barrier-free Canada. By developing comprehensive accessibility standards and encouraging their adoption, it aims to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of their abilities, have equal access to opportunities and can participate fully in society. The collaborative and inclusive approach of Accessibility Standards Canada ensures that the experiences and perspectives of persons with disabilities are understood, and their needs are met, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable future.

Appendix C: Relevant News Articles

Employment

Sharma, R. (2019, October 17). Challenges of doing business in Iqaluit. Nunavut News. <https://www.nunavutnews.com/uncategorized/challenges-of-doing-business-in-iqaluit-7278040>

Darrell, G. (2024, Apr 3,). Nunavut on the right path, but language and workplace issues lag, says Paul Kaludjak. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/nunavut-on-the-right-path-but-language-and-workplace-issues-lag-says-paul-kaludjak-7337378>

Morritt-Jacobs, C. (2022, December 12). Nunavut community hopes pre-employment course helps put people to work. *APTN News*. Retrieved from <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/nunavut-community-hopes-pre-employment-course-helps-put-people-to-work/>

NNSL News. (2020, February 23). Nunavut's ugly double-digit unemployment rate must come down, says Main. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/nunavuts-ugly-double-digit-unemployment-rate-must-come-down-says-main-7278593>

Rohner, T. (2017, March 3). Iqaluit soup kitchen, inclusion café in demand, outgrowing space. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674iqaluit_soup_kitchen_inclusion_cafe_in_demand_outgrowing_space/

Built Environment

Burnett, S. (2024, March 7). This is what you're stuck with. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/this-is-what-youre-stuck-with-7326822>

NNSL News. (2020, December 21). More access needed to accessibility services: Ramps, home care, health coverage can pose challenges. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/more-access-needed-to-accessibility-services-ramps-home-care-health-coverage-can-pose-challenges-7280016>

NNSL News. (2020, October 27). Nunavut residents being left behind on infrastructure, Conservative critic contends. Nunavut News. Retrieved (2023, June 21) from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/nunavut-residents-being-left-behind-on-infrastructure-conservative-critic-contends-7279756>

Hudson, A. (2022, June 1). Rankin Inlet's Richard Subgut works to make life better for people with disabilities. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/rankin-inlet-richard-subgut-accessibility-disability-1.6467403>

CBC News. (2012, November 27). Nunavut elevators not inspected regularly. Some in territory haven't been checked in 8 years. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-elevators-not-inspected-regularly-1.1217140>

Ritchot, M. (2021, August 6). Pang group to tackle overwhelming challenges faced by people with disabilities. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/pang-group-to-tackle-overwhelming-challenges-faced-by-people-with-disabilities/>

CBC News. (2023, March 8). Patients shovel snow off wheelchair ramp at embattled Iqaluit boarding home. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/patients-shovel-snow-off-wheelchair-ramp-at-embattled-iqaluit-boarding-home-1.6772031>

Beth, R. (2016, December 15). Blind in the Arctic: A survivor's guide to living in Nunavut. BBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/disability-38132001>

Communication

Wright, T. (2023, February 13). Animated short explores loss of language. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/animated-short-explores-loss-of-language-7282370>

NNSL News. (2023, February 10). Arctic Inspiration Prize hands out \$2.7 million in awards. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/arctic-inspiration-prize-hands-out-2-7-million-in-awards-7282366>

Sahar Zerehi, S. (2016, May 11). Nunavut language commissioner critical of Qikiqtani General Hospital. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-language-commissioner-report-on-qikiqtani-hospital-1.3576195>

NNSL News. (2017, August 15). Nunavut's language challenges are many. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/editorial/nunavuts-language-challenges-are-many-7275289>

Procurement

Punter, C. (2021, June 11). Baker Lake woman back at home thanks to wheelchair donation. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/baker-lake-woman-back-at-home-thanks-to-wheelchair-donation-7280649>

NNSL News. (2017, October 14). Kugluktuk prepared to build continuing care facility. Nunavut News. Retrieved 2023, June 20 from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/business/kugluktuk-prepared-build-continuing-care-facility-7275475>

Howitt, M. (2024, April 5). Aging Igloolik school has 127 issues that need fixing: Report. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/aging-igloolik-school-has-127-issues-that-need-fixing-report/>

Shari Narine. (2023, October 31). To sustain hope for Indigenous language revitalization, funding must change, commissioner hears. Nunavut News. Retrieved 2023, June 24 from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/to-sustain-hope-for-indigenous-language-revitalization-funding-must-change-commissioner-hears-7282822>

Programs and Services

Neary, D. (2021, February 15). No improvements in the system, MLA Tony Akoak says of mental health resources in Gjoa Haven. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/no-improvements-in-the-system-mla-tony-akoak-says-of-mental-health-resources-in-gjoa-haven-7280198>

Burnett, S. (2022, May 5). Rankin Inlet mother decries lack of anesthesia services. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.>

nunavutnews.com/news/rankin-inlet-mother-decries-lack-of-anesthesia-services-7281852

Ki Sun Hwang, P.; Konek, J. (2018, July 30). Iqaluit resident calls for accessibility upgrades at aquatic centre. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yugh-ahuja-accessibility-issue-aquatic-centre-igaluit-1.4764912>

Meral, J. (2023, April 13). Six community health centres on reduced or emergency service in Nunavut. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/six-community-health-centres-on-reduced-or-emergency-service-in-nunavut/>

Murray, N. (2024, February 2). Team Nunavut struggles with passports, travel for Arctic Winter Games. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/team-nunavut-awg-passport-difficulties-1.7102488>

Thompson, L. (2020, February 21). The myth of the Inuit Child First Initiative. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/the-myth-of-the-inuit-child-first-initiative/>

Sarkisian, A. (2024, June 3). Flawed federal dental care plan will have little effect in Nunavut: MP. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/flawed-federal-dental-care-plan-will-have-little-effect-in-nunavut-mp/>

Courtney E. (2018, December 11). Iqaluit restaurant apologizes for refusing service to customer with disability. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/igaluit-restaurant-apologizes-for-refusing-service-to-customer-with-disability/>

Rohner, T. (2019, October 3). Project aims to unite Nunavut residents affected by FASD. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/project-aims-to-unite-nunavut-residents-affected-by-fasd/>

Bell, J. (2019, May 10). FASD in Nunavut a health-care rights issue, stakeholders say. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/fasd-in-nunavut-a-health-care-rights-issue-stakeholders-say/>

Bell, J. (2019, May 24). We can't determine FASD prevalence, Nunavut government says. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/we-cant-determine-fasd-prevalence-nunavut-government-says/>

Information and Communication Technology

Burnett, S. (2022, March 4). Nunavut internet service enough to drive a man mad. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/news/nunavut-internet-service-enough-to-drive-a-man-mad-7281611>

NNSL News. (2020, October 22). NTI measures 'deplorable' infrastructure gap in new report, seeks further government commitments. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/nti-measures-deplorable-infrastructure-gap-in-new-report-seeks-further-government-commitments-7279724>

NNSL News. (2022, March 14). Nunavut News editorial: Connection isn't an option. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/opinion/nunavut-news-editorial-connection-isnt-an-option-7281665>

McKay, J. (2020, June 4). 'A lot of struggle': Nunavut students face challenges learning from home. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/covid-19-nunavut-students-1.5595556>

Mathisen, H. (2021, January 5). Nunavut's internet is slow, expensive, and unreliable. Up Here. Retrieved from <https://www.uphere.ca/articles/nunavuts-internet-slow-expensive-and-unreliable>

Transportation

NNSL News. (2018, August 2). Iqaluit council appeals for more airline competition. Nunavut News. Retrieved from <https://www.nunavutnews.com/nunavut-news/iqaluit-council-appeals-for-more-airline-competition-7276539>

Wat, S. (2024, June 27). New accessibility and safety rules for Iqaluit cabs a first step for advocates. CBC News. Retrieved from

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/new-accessibility-and-safety-rules-for-igaluit-cabs-a-first-step-for-advocates-1.7247834>

Ka'nhehsí:io, D. (2024, April 18). First Nations are implementing accessibility plans — but they face big challenges, AFN says. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/accessibility-first-nations-1.7177534>

Hudson, A. (2022, June 2). Struggle for wheelchair accessible van in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, outlives 2 who needed it. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/accessibility-nunavut-disability-services-needed-1.6468664>

Brown, B. (2020, February 19). Missed flights cost Nunavut \$1.7M in medical travel last year. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/missed-flights-cost-nunavut-medical-travel-1.5468011>

Howitt, M. (2023, June 1). Idlout grills Liberals on Canadian North flight prices. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/idlout-grills-liberals-on-cannorth-flight-prices/>

Minogue, S., & Kyle, K. (2020, June 23). Northern travel bubble for Canadian North passengers to include Nunavut and N.W.T. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/northern-travel-bubble-canadian-north-nunavut-n-w-t-1.5618541>

CBC News. (2024, May 22). Nunavut family wants apology after 7-year-old boy kicked off Canadian North flight. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-family-wants-apology-7-year-old-boy-kicked-off-canadian-north-flight-1.7211160>

Sakiyama Kennedy, A. (2022, December 19). Elders in Pond Inlet to get bus service by late 2023. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/elders-in-pond-inlet-to-get-bus-service-by-late-2023/>

Meral, J. (2022, November 8). Stranded in Rankin Inlet: Woman and son spend night in sea can. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/stranded-in-rankin-inlet-woman-and-son-spend-night-in-sea-can/>

Rogers, S. (2019, May 1). Lack of local transport leaves Nunavut man in wheelchair stranded. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/lack-of-local-transport-leaves-nunavut-man-in-wheelchair-stranded/>

Accessibility Standards Canada

Canada Employment and Social Development Canada, & Canada Accessibility Standards Canada. (2021). Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations: module 1: accessibility plans. Employment and Social Development Canada = Emploi et Développement social Canada. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/nac-asc/AS4-30-1-2021-eng.pdf

Canada Employment and Social Development Canada, & Canada Accessibility Standards Canada. (2021). Guidance on the Accessible Canada Regulations: sample accessibility plan template. Employment and Social Development Canada = Emploi et Développement social Canada. <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/redirect?app=damspub&id=b18eae8-5fb9-4841-baca-0a9b5fff1658>

Canada Accessibility Standards Canada. (2021). Roadmap to 2040: a plan to guide the work of Accessibility Standards Canada. Accessibility Standards Canada = Normes d'accessibilité Canada. https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly_acquisitions_list-ef/2022/22-06/publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/nac-asc/AS4-25-2021-eng.pdf

Other

Grant, K. (2022, June 29). In Nunavut, medical staff saw signs of a devastating TB outbreak. The government didn't. The Globe and Mail. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-nunavut-pangnirtung-tuberculosis-outbreak-crisis/>

Kupfer, M. (2022, December 15). Over 1,000 Nunavut Inuit children have had to travel to Ottawa for healthcare since January. CBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/nunavut-inuit-children-healthcare-ottawa-travel-1.6680712>

Ritchot, M. (2021, August 6). Pang group to tackle overwhelming challenges faced by people with disabilities. Nunatsiaq News.

Retrieved 2023, June 23 from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/pang-group-to-tackle-overwhelming-challenges-faced-by-people-with-disabilities/>

Ritchot, M. (2023, July 3). Pond Inlet woman advocates for accessibility on world stage. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/pond-inlet-woman-advocates-for-accessibility-on-world-stage/>

Rohner, T. (2019, October 3). Project aims to unite Nunavut residents affected by FASD. Nunatsiaq News. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/project-aims-to-unite-nunavut-residents-affected-by-fasd/>



ᑎᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑖᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑕᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ ᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦᑦ
Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit Society
Nunavummi Pimmaqluktut Makinnasuaqtiit Katimayiit
Société Nunavummi Disabilities Makinnasuaqtiit

www.nuability.ca

(867) 979-2228

connect@nuability.ca

110-505B Astro Hill Terrace
Iqaluit, NU X0A 2H0